The Shame Dance

WILBUR DANIEL STEELE

UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC
LIBRARY
1851
STOCKTON, CALIFORNIA

WITHDRAWN

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/bwb_S0-AKP-346

THE SHAME DANCE

THE SHAME DANCE
AND OTHER STORIES

By WILBUR DANIEL STEELE

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON

LIBRARY

AUG 13 1974

UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC

283889

THE SHAME DANCE

Copyright, 1923
By Harper & Brothers
Printed in the U.S.A.

First Edition
D-X

To
THURSTON

CONTENTS

	PAGE
The Shame Dance	1
The White Man	39
"La Guiablesse"	67
Both Judge and Jury	110
Always Summer	138
At Two-in-the-Bush	165
The Anglo-Saxon	198
The Marriage in Kairwin	235
"He That Hideth His Secret"	265
From the Other Side of the South	296
"Arab Stuff"	325
The Man Who Sat	355

THE SHAME DANCE

"STORIES of New York life preferable." Well, then, here is a story of New York. A tale of the night-heart of the city, where the vein of Forty-second touches the artery of Broadway; where, amid the constellations of chewing-gum ads and tooth pastes and memory methods, rise the incandescent façades of "dancing academies" with their "sixty instructresses," their beat of brass and strings, their whisper of feet, their clink of dimes. . . . Let a man not work away his strength and his youth. Let him breathe a new melody; let him draw out of imagination a novel step, a more fantastic tilt of the pelvis, a wilder gesticulation of the deltoid. Let him put out his hand to the Touch of Gold. . . .

It is a tale of this New York. That it didn't chance to happen in New York is beside the point. Where? It wouldn't help you much if I told you. Taai. That island. Take an imaginary ramrod into Times Square, push it straight down through the center of the earth; where it comes out on the other side will not be very many thousand miles wide of that earth-speck in the South Seas. Some thousands, yes; but out here a few thousand miles and a month or so by

schooner make less difference than they do where the trains run under the ground. . . .

"Glauber's Academy"—"Einstein's Restaurant"—"Herald Square" ——

I can't tell you how bizarrely those half-fabulous names fell from Signet's lips in the turquoise and gold of the afternoon. It was like the babble of some monstrous and harmless mythology. And all the while, as he kicked his bare heels on the deck house and harassed me with his somnolent greed for "talk," one could see him wondering, wondering, in the back of his mind. So he would have been wondering through all the hours of weeks, months—it had come to the dignity of years, on the beach, in the bush—wondering more than ever under the red iron roof of the Dutchman: "What in hell am I doing here? What in hell?"

A guttersnipe, pure and simple. That's to say *im*pure and unpleasantly complex. It was extraordinary how it stuck. Even with nothing on but a pair of cotton pants, swimming out to me among the flashing bodies of the islanders, men, women, girls, youths, who clung to the anchor cable and showed their white teeth for pilot biscuit, condensed milk, and gin—especially gin—even there you could see Signet, in imagination, dodging through the traffic on Seventh Avenue to pick the *Telegraph Racing Chart* out of the rubbish can under the Elevated. . . .

I hadn't an idea who the fellow was. He

burst upon me unheralded. I sail out of west-coast ports, but once I had been in New York. That was enough for him. He was "pals" in ten minutes; in fifteen, from his eminence on the deck house, with a biscuit in one hand and a tumbler of much-diluted Hollands in the other, he gazed down at his erstwhile beach fellows with almost the disdainful wonder of a tourist from a white ship's rail. . . .

"Gi' me an article you can retail at a nickel—any little thing everybody needs—or gi' me a song with a catchy chorus—something you can turn out on them ten-cent records. . . . That makes *me*. Don't want any Wall Street stuff. That's for Rockefeller and the boobs. But just one time le' me catch on with one little old hunch that'll go in vaudeville or the pi'tures—get Smith and Jones diggin' for the old nickel. . . . That makes *me*. Then the line can move up one. That's the thing about New York. . . . Say, man, len' me a cigarette. . . . But that's the thing about Broadway. When you make, you make *big*. I know a guy turned out a powder-puff looked like a lor'nette—a quarter of a dollar. You know how the Janes 'll fall for a thing like that——"

It was completely preposterous, almost uncomfortable. It made a man look around him. On the schooner's port side spread the empty blue of the South Pacific; the tenuous snowdrift of the reef, far out, and the horizon. On the starboard hand, beyond the little space

of the anchorage, curved the beach, a pink-white scimitar laid flat. Then the scattering of thatched and stilted huts, the red, corrugated-iron store, residence and godowns of the Dutch trader, the endless Indian file of coco palms, the abrupt green wall of the mountain. . . . A twelve-year-old girl, naked as Eve and, I've no doubt, thrice as handsome, stood watching us from the mid-decks in a perfection of immobility, an empty milk tin propped between her brown palms resting on her breast. Twenty fathoms off a shark-fin, blue as lapis in the shadow, cut the water soundlessly. The hush of ten thousand miles was disturbed by nothing but that grotesque, microscopic babbling:

"Say you play in bad luck. Well, you can't play in bad luck *f'rever*. Not if you're wise. One time I get five good wheezes. Good ones! Sure fire! One of 'em was the old one about the mother-'n-law and the doctor, only it had a perfectly novel turn to it. Did I make? I did not. Why? Well, a good friend o' mine lifts them five wheezes, writes a vaudeville turn around 'em, and makes big. Big! What does that learn me? Learns me to go bear on friendship. So next time I get an idea ——"

The girl had put the milk tin down between her toes on deck and turned her head.

"Digger!" I called to the mate. "Clear the vessel! Shove them all overboard! Here comes the Dutchman!"

Before the advance of the trader's canoe,

painted vermilion like his establishment and flying over the water under the paddle strokes of his six men, Signet took himself hastily overboard with the rest. There was no question of protest or false pride. Over he went. Rising and treading water under the taffrail, and seeing the trader still some fathoms off, he shook the wet from the rag of a beard with which long want of a razor had blurred his peaked chin and gathered up the ends of the conversation:

"No, Dole, you can't play in bad luck *f'rever*. One sure-fire hunch, that's all. That makes me. When I get back to Broadway ——"

A paddle blade narrowly missed his head. He dived.

The Dutchman told me more about him that evening. I dined at the trader's house. He was a big-bodied, tow-haired man who spoke English with the accent of an east-coast Scot, drank like a Swede, and viewed life through the eyes of a Spaniard—that is, he could be diabolical without getting red in the face.

"No, my dear sir, that Signet shall not 'get back to Broadway.' Too many have I seen. He is too tired. Quite too tired."

"But how in the world did he ever come here, Mynheer?"

"That is simple. This Signet got drunk in Papeete. He was on his way to Australia with a pugilist. How should he be in a pugilist's company, this crab? Because he plays a good game of pinochle—to keep the pugilist's mind bright.

At any event, the steamship stops at Tahiti. This Signet gets drunk. 'Soused!' And the steamship is gone without him. No more pinochle for the pugilist, what? . . . From then, my dear sir, it is what it shall always be; one island throws him to another island. Here he shall stay for a while ——"

"Till you decide to 'throw' him to another island, eh, Mynheer?"

"No, but I am alone. Sometimes to amuse myself I will invite him to dine with me. I put on him a suit of the evening clothes which belong to my nephew who is dead. But I will not allow him the razor, since his absurd beard is amusing to me. Afterward, however, I take away the evening clothes and I will kick him out. But he is talking continuously."

"I believe you, Mynheer."

"But at last I will say: 'My dear sir, suppose that you should have the most brilliant idea; that "hunch" of yours. "Sure-fire." What advantage will it do you here in the island of Taai? You are not here on Broadway. You are too many thousand miles. You cannot come there. You are too tired. It takes money. Now, my dear sir, I am putting a trench about the godowns. If you wish, I will let you work for me.' "

"What does he say to that, Mynheer?"

"He says, 'Do you take me for an *I*talian?"

"Then I will say: 'No; you see you are too tired. Also you are too soft. You are a criminal. That's natural to you. But you think of

police. You have a wish, say. Well, my dear sir, but would you kill a man—three—ten men —to have that wish? No, you are too tired, and you must have the police. But here there are no police. *I* am the police. Why do you not kill *me?* Ha-ha-ha! Then you could take my property. Then you would "make big," as you say. My dear sir, that is a "hunch"! That is "sure fire"! Ha-ha-ha!' . . . Then I will kick him out in his coolie cotton pants."

After coffee the trader said: "One gallon of the Hollands which you sent me ashore has disappeared. The kitchen boys are 'careless.' Also I wink one eye when a schooner arrives. Of course they will dance to-night, however. You would care to go up, my dear sir?"

Of course we went. There's no other amusement in an islet like Taai but the interminable native dance. The Dutchman led the way up a narrow, bushy ravine, guiding me by sound rather than by sight.

"Up this same very path," I heard him, "has gone one uncle of mine. They pulled him to the advance with one rope around his arms. Then they cut him up and ate him. But that was many years ago, my dear sir. Now I am the law. Maybe there shall come, now and then, a Dutch gunboat to have a look-in. I raise up that flag. The captain shall dine with me. All is good. But, my dear sir, I am the law."

The "music" began to be heard, a measured monotone of drums, a breath of voices in a reci-

tative chant, slightly impassioned by that vanished gallon. The same old thing, indeed; one of the more than fifty-seven varieties of the island *hula*. Then that had died away.

The light from the "place" grew among the higher leaves. And the trader, becoming visible, halted. I saw him standing, listening.

"No, my dear sir, but that is a new thing."

He started forward. He stopped again. I heard it now. Out of the familiar, hollow tautophony of drumbeats there began to emerge a thread of actual melody—an untraditional rise and fall of notes—a tentative attack, as it were, on the chromatic scale of the west. No he-goat's skin stretched on bamboo would do that.

We pushed on, curious. We came out into the "place." The scene under the candlenut torches was as familiar to us as the Ohio River of Uncle Tom to the small-town schoolboy; the meager rows of three-quarters naked Kanakas, yellow with saffron and blue with tattooer's ink; the old women in the background of sultry lights and enormous shadows compounding endless balls of *popoi* for the feast; the local and desceptered chieftain squatting on his hams and guarding the vanished gallon between his knees; this was all as it should have been. This was the convention. . . . But what was really happening on that sylvan, torchlit stage that night was something as new as anything can be under the sun, because it was something that had not happened for ten thousand years. . .

We who are worn with novelty can never reconquer for ourselves the thrill of an unmitigated wonder. We have sold the birthright. But imagine the toppling of a hundred centuries! You could have seen it in the eyes of those watchers, in their rapt, rapacious attention, in the conflict that went on within them visibly; traitorous applause pent and pitted against all the instinctive protest of an established art. . . .

"Yes, but this isn't *dancing!*"

Yet their bodies, one here, one there, would begin to sway. . . .

Three Kanaka men, strangers to the island, sat cross-legged on the turf. One had taken over a drum from a local musician. The other two had instruments fashioned of dried gourds with fingering pieces of bamboo and strings of gut —barbaric cousins to the mandolin. So, on this one night in history, the music of another tribe had come to Taai. It just escaped being an authentic "tune." How it escaped was indefinable. The sophisticated ear would almost have it, and abruptly it had got away in some provoking lapse, some sudden and bizarre disintegration of tone. And the drumbeat, bringing it back, ran like a fever pulse in a man's blood.

In the center of the sward, her back to the musicians, a solitary female danced; a Kanaka woman, clothed in a single shift of the sheerest crimson cotton, tied at one shoulder and falling to mid-thigh. Not from Taai did this woman

come; one saw that; nor from any near island or group. Her beauty was extraordinary, like that of the Marquesans, with that peculiar straightness of all lines, at once Grecian, austere, and incalculably voluptuous. . . .

The dance, as I saw it for the first time that night, I will not speak of. I have traded to many islands in many groups—even the Low Archipelago—but the island where that dance was indigenous I am sure I've never touched. Compared with any of the *hulas,* set and fixed in each locality as the rites of Rome, it was sophisticated; it gave an illusion of continuous invention and spontaneity; it was flesh swept by a wind and shattered; it ravished the eyes.

I don't know how long I watched; how long all the immortal flame in me lent itself to the histrionic purposes of that woman. But I shall never forget it. Never! Never!

I looked away. I saw two faces. One of them hung over my shoulder. It was the trader's. It was the face of a man who has lived a very long while wielding power of life and death over unsatisfying satisfactions. A man awakened! The toppling of a hundred centuries, indeed!

The other was Signet's. Scarred by leaf shadows, thrust like a swimmer's from the meager sea of heads and naked shoulders, it held as still as a death-mask minute by minute, except that, in the penumbra cast by the veil of goat tuft on his chin, the Adam's apple was convulsed at in-

tervals, as if he were swallowing, as if the man were *drinking!*

The night grew. The torches were consumed, the "place" deserted. Somewhere the amazing voyagers had taken themselves to rest. A half-moon mutilated the island—long stripes of palms, shadow-scars of defiles, mottles of bushes. It was like a sleeping animal, a tiger of deep blue and blue-white, an enormous leopard.

We sat on the veranda at the Residence, the trader and I. By and by, soft-footed, Signet was there, occupying the lowermost step.

The Dutchman talked. Like the able administrator he was, he had already all the data to be procured. Into his ears had poured the whispered trickles of a score of informants.

"You are right, my dear sir. Marquesan. You have been there?"

"No."

"She is called in Polynesian, 'Queen Daughter.' My people, who know nothing as a rule, of course—but they tell me the woman is in actuality the daughter of a queen. But what is a Kanaka queen? After all, Signet, my dear sir, down there, what is one queen, out here?"

The trader was obviously in a good humor. He had not been excited for years. The man was alive. I've said he was like a Spaniard in that he could be diabolical without getting red in the face. Diabolically devious and strategic! Before he resumed he blew three mouthfuls of

cigar smoke out into the moonlight, where they burst from the shadow under the roof like mute cannon shots, round and silvery. Beneath them, from the step, Signet's eyes were fixed upon the trader's face, dry, rapt, glazed with some imperious preoccupation.

"But they tell me this woman has danced in a great many islands. She will go from here to another island to dance. The three men are her husbands. But she is no wife. A maid, that woman! They have the hardihood to tell me that. Ha-ha-ha! But, then, she is daughter to a queen. With those 'husbands' she crosses a hundred leagues of sea in her sailing canoe. That royal canoe! To dance at another island. . . ."

As the Dutchman talked, blowing his smoke bursts into the moonlight, the vision of that Marquesan woman came again before me. I perceived her, under the heavy procession of his words, a figure of astounding romance, an adventuress incomparable, a Polynesian bacchante. No, I saw her as the missionary of a strange thing, crossing oceans, daring thirst and gale and teeth of sharks, harrying deeper and deeper into the outseas of mystery that small, devoted polyandrous company of husbands, at once her paddlers, cooks, flunkies, watchdogs, music makers. "Queen Daughter!" Royal and self-anointed priestess of that unheard-of dance, the tribal dance, no doubt, of some tiny principality rearing a cone in the empty hugeness of the sea. . . . I

couldn't get away from my time and race. I found myself wondering "what she got out of it"—in some jungle-bowered, torch-lit "high place," to feel again the toppling of ten thousand years? Was it something to feel the voluptuous and abominable beauty of that rhythm going out of her flesh, beat by beat, and entering into the flesh of those astounded and half-hostile watchers? Perhaps. . . .

"They tell me that she has also danced at Papeete—before the white men of the steamships," the Dutchman was informing us.

At that, from the step, from the moon-blue huddle of the castaway, there came a sound. With a singular clarity of divination I built up the thought, the doubt, the bitter perturbation in the fellow's mind. The woman had danced then at Papeete, the cross-roads, the little Paris of mid-seas. And before the white men from steamers —the white men that go back!

Moved by projects deeper and more devious than ours, the Dutchman made haste to cover up what seemed to have been an overshot. Frankly he turned his attention to the outcast.

"By the God, then, my dear Signet, have you considered?"

He knew well enough that Signet had "considered." He could see as well as I that Signet was a changed man. But he must "pile it on."

"There, my dear sir, you have it. That 'hunch'! That 'sure fire'! Do you think I do not know that New York of yours? Such a dance

as that! You must believe me. If you were but a man of energy, now. . . ." With the utmost deliberation he launched upon a tirade of abuse. "But, no, you are not a man of energy, not a man to take things in your hands. The obstacles are too big. Those three husbands! You might even take that woman, that lovely, royal dancing woman—you, my dear sir, a common street snipe. What would a woman like that, with that novel, impassioned, barbaric, foreign dance, be worth to a man on your Broadway? Eh? But obstacles! Obstacles! You have her not on Broadway. It is too many thousand miles, and you have no money. But see, if you were a man to grasp things, a man to 'hit the nail in the head,' to 'boost,' to 'go big'—then would not a man like me, who turns everything to gold—would he not say to you quickly enough, 'See here, my dear sir, but let me put so much money into the undertaking myself'?"

Under the explosions of cigar smoke, Signet continued to hold the trader with his eyes; seemed to consume him with the fixed, dry fire of his gaze. Not fathoming, as with a singular intuition I had fathomed, the profound purposes of the Dutchman, Signet saw only the implied promise in his words. . . . The trader broke out once more with a sardonic and calculated spleen:

"But, no! Obstacles! A sniveling little animal sees only obstacles. The obstacle not to be mounted over—those three husbands. There they lie to-night on Nakokai's platform—this

beautiful, incredible 'Queen Daughter'—this gold goddess of the 'Shame Dance'—and about her those three husbands. Ah, my dear sir, but their big, lithe muscles! That is too much! To imagine them leaping up at the alarm in the moonlight, the overpowering and faithful husbands. No, he cannot put out his hand to take the gift. *Pah!* He is a criminal in nature, but he is afraid of the police, even here. He is not a man for the big life in these islands. He will never do anything. Those faithful, strong watchdogs of husbands! Those strong destructive muscles! Dear, good God, that is too much to think of. . . . Look, my dear sir!"

He was speaking to me, as if Signet were less than the very pebbles at the step. He got up, striking the floor heavily with his boots, and I followed him into the house, where he took a lighted candle from a stand. Buried in our shadows, silent-footed, Signet pursued us as the trader had meant him to do. I persist in saying that I perceived the thing as a whole. From the first I had divined the maneuver of the Dutchman.

"Look!" he repeated, flinging open a door and thrusting in the candle to cast its light over ranks and ranges of metal. It was the gunroom of the Residence. Here dwelt the law. Shotguns, repeating rifles, old-style revolvers, new, blue automatics. An arsenal!

"Big brown muscles!" he cried, with a ponderous disdain. "What are they? What is the strongest brown man? *Puff!* To a man of pur-

pose and indomitable will like me! Obstacles? Three husbands? *Puff-puff-puff!* Like that! . . . But all that will never be of use to *him*. That Signet! No, he is a street snipe who will steal a pocketbook and call it a crime. He is afraid to grasp. . . . But it is close in here, is it not?"

It was too bald. He stepped across the floor, unlatched and threw open the blind of the window, letting the candlelight stream forth upon a mass of bougainvillea vine without.

"I keep this door locked; you can imagine that," he laughed, returning and shutting us out of the gunroom. He twisted the key; put it in his pocket. And there, at the back, that window-blind stood open.

He stared at Signet, as if the beachcomber were just discovered.

"You are hopeless, my dear sir."

"Let us have a drink," he shifted.

For Signet he poured out a tumblerful of raw gin. The fellow took it like a man in a daze—the daze of a slowly and fiercely solidifying resolution. It shivered in his hand. A habit of greed sucked his lips. Into his mouth he took a gulp of the spirits. He held it there. His eyes searched our faces with a kind of malignant defiance. Of a sudden he spat the stuff out, right on the floor. He said nothing. It was as if he said: "By God! if you think I need *that! No!* You don't know me!"

He stalked out of the door. When we fol-

lowed as far as the veranda we saw him making off into the striped light to the left. . . .

"Why did you call it the 'Shame Dance,' Mynheer?" We were seated again.

"Of course, my dear sir, it is not that, but it has a sound so when the Kanakas speak it. The woman spoke the name. If it is a Polynesian word I have not heard it before. 'Shemdance.' Like that."

"A good name, though. By jingo! a darn good name. Eh, Mynheer?"

But the trader's head was turned in an attitude of listening. Triumphant listening—at the keyhole of the striped, moonlit night. I heard it, too—a faint disturbance of the bougainvillea foliage around two sides of the house, near the window standing open to the gun room.

Of course the amazing thing was that the man fooled us. In the Dutchman's heart, I believe, there was nothing but astonishment at his own success. Signet, on the face of it, was the typical big talker and little doer; a flaw in character which one tends to think imperishable. He fitted so precisely into a certain pigeonhole of humankind. . . . What we had not counted on was the fierceness of the stimulus—like the taste of blood to a carnivore, or, to the true knight, a glimpse of the veritable Grail.

All the following day I spent on board overseeing the hundred minor patchings and calkings a South Sea trader will want in port. When I went ashore that evening, after sundown, I found

the Dutchman sitting in the same chair on the veranda, blowing smoke out into the afterglow. There was the illusion of perfect continuity with the past. Yesterday, to-day, to-morrow. Life flowed like a sleeping river, it would seem.

But this was the status of affairs. The three brown music makers, sons-in-law to an island queen, lay on a platform somewhere within the edge of the bush heavier by ounces with thirty-two caliber slugs, awaiting burial. And Signet, guttersnipe, beachcomber, and midnight assassin, was lodged in the "calaboose," built stoutly in a corner of the biggest and reddest of the Dutchman's godowns. As for the royal dancing woman, I was presently, in the trader's phrase, to "have a look at her."

At his solicitation I followed around the house, past the gun-room window (locked fast enough now, you may be sure), and up steeply through a hedged, immaculate garden which witnessed to the ordered quality of the owner's mind. At the upper end, under a wall of volcanic tufa, we came to a summerhouse done in the native style, stilts below, palmiste thatch above, and walled on three sides only with hanging screens of bamboo. Striking through this screen from the west, the rose and green of the afterglow showed the woman as in a semi-luminous cavern, seated cross-legged in the center of the platform, her hands drooped between her knees, and her large, dark eyes fixed upon the sea beyond the roof of the Residence below.

Was it the perfect immobility of defiance ard disdain? Not once did her transfixed gaze take us in. Was it the quiescence of defeat and despair—that level brooding over the ocean which had been to her, first and last, a cradle and a roadway for her far, adventurous pilgrimages? She sat there before our peering eyes, the sudden widow, the daughter of potentates brought low, the goddess of an exuberant and passionate vitality struck with quietude; mute, astounded by catastrophe, yet unbowed. The beauty of that golden-skinned woman abashed me.

It did not abash the Dutchman. His was another and more indomitable fiber. It is fine to succeed, beyond expectation, detail by detail of strategy. His hands were clean. He remained the perfect administrator. Had there been no other way, he would not have flinched at any necessary lengths of wholesale or retail butchery. Still, it was nice to think that his hands were spotless. For instance, if that gunboat, with its purple-whiskered Amsterdammer of a captain, should just now happen in.

His face glowed in the dusk. His eyes shone with frank calculations. Fists on hips, head thrust out, one saw him casting up the sum of his treasure trove. . . . But he was an epicure. He could wait. It was even delightful to wait. When I turned away he came down with me, his hands still on his hips and his eyes on the gently emerging stars.

The man was extraordinary. Sitting on the veranda, bombarding the direction of the foreshore with that huge, deliberate fusillade of cigar smoke, he talked of home, of his boyhood on the dike at Volendam, and of his mother, who, bless her! was still alive to send him cheeses at Christmas time.

It was midnight and the moon was rising when I got away and moved down toward the beach where the dinghy waited. The horizontal ray struck through the grating of the "calaboose" at the corner of the godown I was skirting. I saw the prisoner. The upright shadow of an iron bar cut his face in two, separating the high, soiled cheeks, each with an eye.

"You mustn't leave him get at her!"

I tell you it was not the same man that had come swimming and sniveling out to the schooner less than forty hours before. Here was a fierce one, a zealot, a flame, the very thin blade of a fine sword.

"Listen, Dole, if you leave that devil get at her ——"

His eyes burned through me. He failed completely to accept the fact that he was done. His mind, ignoring the present, ran months ahead. With a flair of understanding, thinking of those three travesties of husbands and the wife who was no wife, I perceived what he meant.

I left him. He was a wild man, but the quality of his wildness showed itself in the fact that he squandered none of it in shaking the bars,

shouting, or flinging about. His voice to the last, trailing me around the next corner, held to the same key, almost subdued.

"By God! if that —— gets at her, I'll— I'll ——"

"You'll what?" I mused. You see, even now I couldn't get rid of him as the drifter, the gutter Hamlet, the congenital howler against fate. "You'll what?" I repeated under my breath, and I had to laugh.

I got the vessel under way as soon as I came aboard. The Dutchman's shipment of copra was arranged for—a week, two, three weeks (as the wind allowed)— and I was to return from the lower islands, where my present cargo was assigned, and take it on.

As we stood offshore under the waxing moonlight, as I watched the island, gathering itself in from either extremity, grow small and smaller on the measureless glass of the sea, the whole episode seemed to swell up in my mind, explode, and vanish. It was too preposterous. Thirty-eight hours chosen at random out of ten thousand empty Polynesian years—that in that wink of eternity five human lives should have gone to pot simultaneously—a man wasn't to be taken in by that sort of thing.

Through twelve days it remained at that. Discharging cargo in the furnace of Coco Inlet, if my thoughts went back to Taai, it was almost with the deprecating amusement a man will feel who has been had by a hoax. If those minstrel

husbands were murdered and buried; if that Broadway imp sweated under the red-hot roof of the godown; if that incomparable, golden-skinned heiress of cannibal emperors sat staring seaward from the gilded cage of the Dutchman, awaiting (or no longer awaiting) the whim of the epicure —if indeed any one of them all had ever so much as set foot upon that microscopic strand lost under the blue equator—then it was simply because some one had made it up in his head to while me away an empty hour. I give you my word, when at noon of the thirteenth day the mountain of Taai stood up once more beyond the bows, I was weary of the fantasy. I should have been amazed, really, to find a fellow named Signet housed in the Dutchman's private jail.

As a matter of fact, Signet was not in the jail.

When I went ashore in mid-afternoon, wondering a little why no naked biscuit-beggars or gin swallowers had swum out to bother me that day, I found the trader of Taai sitting on his veranda, blowing puffs of smoke from those fine Manila Club perfectos out into the sunshine. Beside him leaned a shiny, twelve-gauge pump gun which he jostled with an elbow as he bade me by word and gesture to make myself at home.

I'm quite certain I looked the fool. My eyes must have stuck out. Half a dozen times I started to speak. With some vacant, fatuous syllable I tried to break the ice. Strange as it sounds, I was never so embarrassed in my life.

For the trader of Taai, the blatantly obvious

proprietor of the island's industry and overlord of its destinies—sitting there before me now with a pump gun touching his elbow—was this fellow Signet.

Till now I don't know precisely what had happened; that is to say, none of the details of the act, horrid or heroic as they may have been. All I seemed to have was a memory of the Dutchman's voice: "Why do you not kill *me?* Ha-ha-ha! Then you could take my property." And again an echo of his disdainful laughter at that fool, "Ha-ha-ha!" as, on some midnight, he had kicked his dinner guest and his "coolie cotton pants" out into the rain. . . . Why not, indeed? But who now was the "fool"?

Signet, in the course of the afternoon, brought forth gravely a bill of sale, making over in an orderly fashion to B. R. Signet, New York, U.S.A., the real and personal property of the trading station at Taai, and "signed," in the identical, upright, Fourteenth Street grammar-school script, by "the Dutchman." . . . I understood Signet. Signet understood me. The thing was not even an attempt at forgery. It was something solely formal—as much as to say: "This is understood to be the basis of our mutual dealings. You will see I am owner of this place."

As for the Dutchman:

"Oh, the Dutchman? Well, he decided to go away. Go home."

Before the incalculable sang-froid of this rail-bird, movie usher, alley dodger and hanger-on

at dancing academies, I could not so much as summon up the cheek to ask what he had done with the body. You'll say I ought to have acted; that I ought at least to have got up and left him. That shows two things—first, that you've never been a trader in the islands; second, that you cannot at all comprehend how—well, how *stunning* he was. Sitting there, a single fortnight removed from cotton pants and the beach, crime-stained, imperturbable, magnificent! Spawn of the White Lights! Emperor of an island! How's that?

"It's a rich island," he impressed upon me with an intention I was yet to plumb. "Dole," he exclaimed, "it's a gold mine!"

"Is—is *she* here?" I ventured to demand at last.

"*Is* she? Say! Come and have a look."

I was between laughing and wincing at that identical "have a look."

Going up the garden, Signet let me know that the woman was in love with him. I might believe it or not. She would do anything for him.

"*Anything!*" he exclaimed, standing squarely still in the path. And in his eyes I was somehow relieved to find a trace of wonder.

Obstacles! All his life had been a turning back from small, insurmountable obstacles. Of a sudden he beheld really vast obstacles tumbling down, verily at a touch. Here was just one more of them. By a lucky chance this "Queen Daughter" did not know by whose hand she had been made thrice a widow; it was the simplest thing

to suppose it the trader, the same big, blond, European man who had presently removed her "for safety" to the summerhouse behind the Residence. . . . And from the trader, by a gesture of melodramatic violence, the other and slighter man had set her free. . . . Perhaps even that would not have intrigued her essentially barbaric interest as much as it did had it not been for his amazing attitude of, well, let's say, "refrainment." His almost absurdly fastidious concern for what the West would call "the sanctity of her person." You can imagine—to a Marquesan woman! That! She was not ugly.

As her gaze, from the platform, dwelt upon the shrewd, blade-sharp features of the man beside me, the elementary problem in her eyes seemed to redouble the peculiar, golden, Aryan beauty of her face. Let me tell you I am human. Perhaps Signet was human, too. Standing there, encompassed by the light of that royal and lovely woman's eyes, there was surely about him a glow —and a glow not altogether, it seemed to me, of "Smith's nickel and Jones's dime." I could have laughed. I could have kicked him. The impostor! Even yet I had failed to measure the man.

Back on the veranda again, dinner eaten, and dusk come down, Signet brought out an old guitar from among the Dutchman's effects (it had belonged probably to that defunct nephew of the dress clothes), and as he talked he picked at the thing with idle fingers. Not altogether idle, though, I began to think. Something began to

emerge by and by from the random fingerings—a rhythm, a tonal theme. . . . Then I had it, and there seemed to stand before me again the swarded "high place," with torches flaring over upturned faces and mounting walls of green. Almost I sensed again the beat in my blood, the eye-ravishing vision of that gold-brown flame of motion, that voluptuous priestess.

"Oh, yes. That!" I murmured. "It's got something—something—that tune. . . . But how can you remember it?"

"*She* helps me out. I'm trying to put it in shape."

Indeed, when I left that night, and before my oarsmen had got me a cable's length from the beach, I heard the strumming resumed, very faintly, up in the dark behind the Residence; still tentatively, with, now and then through the flawless hush of the night, the guiding note of a woman's voice. (A woman profoundly mystified.)

A rehearsal? For what? For that almost mythical Broadway half around the bulge of the world? Had the fool, then, not got beyond *that?* Yet?

Here he was, lord of the daughter of a queen, proprietor of a "gold mine." For Signet was not to be hoodwinked about the commercial value of Taai. All afternoon and evening, as through the two days following, while my promised cargo was getting ferried out under the shining authority of the pump gun, he scarcely let a minute go by without some word or figure to impress

upon me the extent of his "possessions." To what end?

Well, it all came out in a burst on the third evening, my last there. He even followed me to the beach; actually, regardless of the Dutchman's nephew's boots and trouser legs, he pursued me out into the shallows.

"A gold mine! Don't be a damned boob, Dole. You can see for yourself, a big proposition for a guy like you, with a ship and everything ——"

Upon me he would heap all those priceless "possessions." Me! And in exchange he would ask only cabin passage for two from Taai beach to the Golden Gate. Only deck passage! Only anything!

"Set us down there, me and her, that's all. I'll give you a bill of sale. Why, from where you look at it, it's a *find!* It's a lead-pipe cinch! It's taking candy away from a baby, man!"

"Why don't you keep it, then?"

The soul of his city showed through. I saw him again as I had seen him swimming out in his cotton pants, with that low-comedy whisker and that consuming little greedy nickel hope of paradise. Even the gestures.

"No, but can't you see, Dole? I got a bigger thing up my sleeve. God'l'-mighty, d'you think I'm a *farmer?* You could go big here; *I* don't go at all. I ain't that kind. But put me down in New York with that woman there and that there dance—and that tune—Say! You don't understand. You can't imagine. Money?

Say! And not only money. Say! I could take that up to Glauber's Academy, and I could say to Glauber, 'Glauber,' I could say ——"

I had to leave him standing there, up to his knees in the inky water, heaping me frankly with curses. I shall not repeat the curses. At the end of them he bawled after me:

"But I'll get there! You watch me all the same, all the same, you damn ——"

The reason I didn't up-anchor and get out that night was that when I came aboard I discovered not far from my berth the unobtrusive loom of that Dutch gunboat, arrived for a "look-in" at last.

The only thing for me to do was to sit tight. If, when the state of the island's affairs had been discovered, there should be want of explanation or corroboration, it would be altogether best for me to give it. I wasn't yet through trading in those waters, you understand.

But Signet was no fool. He, too, must have seen the discreet shade of the visitor. When the morning dawned, neither he nor the royal dancer from the Marquesas was to be found. Some time in that night, from the windward beach, ill-manned and desperate, the royal sailing canoe must have set forth tumultuously upon its pilgrimage again.

I sat in a place in Honolulu. Soft drinks were served, and somewhere beyond a tidy screen of palm fronds a band of strings was playing. Even

with soft drinks, the old instinct of wanderers and lone men to herd together had put four of us down at the same table. Two remain vague —a fattish, holiday-making banker and a consumptive from Barre, Vermont. For reasons to appear, I recall the third more in detail.

He let me know somewhere in the give-and-take talk that he was a railway telegraph operator, and that, given his first long vacation, an old impulse come down from the days of the Hawaiian *hula* phonograph records, had brought him to the isle of delight. He was disappointed in it. One could see in his candid eyes that he felt himself done out of an illusion, an illusion of continuous dancing by girls in rope skirts on moonlit beaches. It was an intolerable waste of money. Here, come so far and so expensively to the romantic goal, he was disturbed to find his imagination fleeing back to the incredible adventure of a Rock Island station, an iron-red dot on the bald, high plain of eastern Colorado—to the blind sun-flare of the desert—to the immensity of loneliness—to the thundering nightly crisis of the "Eleven-ten," sweeping monstrous and one-eyed out of the cavern of the West, grating, halting, glittering, gossiping, yawning, drinking with a rush and gurgle from the red tank —and on again with an abrupt and always startling clangor into the remote night of the East. . . .

He shifted impatiently in his chair and made a dreary face at the screening fronds.

"For the love o' Mike! Even the rags they play here are old."

The consumptive was telling the banker about the new co-operative scheme in Barre, Vermont.

"For the love o' Mike!" my friend repeated. "That ain't a band; it's a historical s'ciety. Dead and buried! Next they'll strike up that latest novelty rage, 'In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree'! . . . Now will you listen to that. Robbin' the cemetery!"

He needn't have asked me to listen. As a matter of fact I had been listening for perhaps a hundred seconds; listening, not as if with the ears, but with the deeper sensatory nerves. And without consciously grasping what the air was I had suffered an abrupt voyage through space. I saw a torch-lit sward, ringed with blue and saffron faces and high forest walls; I saw the half-nude, golden loveliness of a Polynesian woman shaken like a windy leaf. And the beat of a goat-hide drum was the beat of my blood. I felt my shoulders swaying.

I looked at the young man. His face expressed a facetious weariness, but his shoulders, too, were swaying.

"What tune is that?" I asked, in a level tone.

His contemptuous amazement was unfeigned.

"Holy Moses! man. Where you been?"

He squinted at me. After all, I might be "stringing him."

"That," he said, "is as old as Adam. It was run to death so long ago I can't remember.

That? That's 'Paragon Park.' That is the old original first 'Shimmie' dance—with whiskers two feet long."

"The original what?"

"Shimmie! *Shimmie!* Say, honest to God, don't you know ——?" And with his shoulders he made a wriggling gesture in appeal to my wits, the crudest burlesque, it seemed, of a divinely abominable gesture in my memory. . . . "That?" he queried. "Eh?"

"Shimmie," I echoed, and, my mind skipping back: *"Shemdance! Shame Dance!* . . . I see!"

"Why?" he demanded, intrigued by my preoccupation.

"Nothing. It just reminded me of something."

Then he lifted a hand and smote himself on the thigh. "Me, too! By jinks! Say, I'd almost forgot that."

He hitched his chair upon me; held me down with a forefinger.

"Listen. That was funny. It was one night —last fall. It was just after Number Seventeen had pulled out, westbound, about one-forty in the morning. There wasn't anything else till six-one. Them are always the hardest hours. A fellow's got to stay awake, see, and nothin' to keep him—unless maybe a coyote howlin' a mile off, or maybe a bum knockin' around among the box cars on the sidin,' or, if it's cold, the stove to tend. That's all. Unless you put a record on the old phonograph and hit 'er up

a few minutes now and then. Dead? Say, boy!"

"Well, this night it was a bum. I'm sittin' there in the coop, countin' my fingers and listenin' to Limon calling off car numbers to Denver—just like that I'm sittin'—when I hear somethin' out in the waitin' room. Not very loud. . . . Well, I go out there, and there's the bum. Come right into the waitin' room.

"Bum! If he wasn't the father and mother and brother and sister of the original bum, I'll eat my hat. Almost a Jew-lookin' guy, and he'd saw hard service. But he's got a kind o' crazy glitter in his eye.

" 'Well,' says I, just like that, 'Well, what do *you* want?'

"He don't whine; he don't handle the pan. He's got that look in his eye.

" 'My woman is out in them box cars,' says he. 'I'm goin' to bring her in here where it's warm.' That's what he says. Not *'can* I bring her in?' but *'goin'* to bring her in'! From a *hobo!*

"Can you imagine? It makes me think. It comes to me the guy is really off his trolley. To keep him calm I says, 'Well——'

"He goes out. 'I'm shed o' *him,'* I says to myself. Not a bit. About three minutes and here he comes trottin' back, sure enough, bringin' a woman with him. Now, Mister—What's-y'r-name—prepare to laugh. That there woman—listen—make up your face—she's a *nigger!*

"He says she ain't a nigger.

" 'Mexican?' says I.

" 'No,' says he.

"I give her another look, but I can't make much out of her, except she's some kind of a nigger, anyhow. She's sittin' on the bench far away from the light, and she's dressed in a second-hand horse blanket, a feed sack, and a bran'-new pair of ar'tics. And she don't say a word.

" 'Well,' says I, 'if she ain't some kind of nigger, I'll eat my ——'

"But there he is, all of a sudden, squarin' off in front o' me, his mug stuck up and his eyes like a couple o' headlights. Imagine! The guy ain't got enough meat on his bones for a rest'-rant chicken. Honest to God, he looked like he'd been through a mile o' sausage mill. But crazy as a bedbug. And there's somethin' about a crazy man ——

" 'Hold y'r gab!' says he. To *me!* That gets my goat.

" 'Just for that,' says I, 'you can get out o' this station. And don't forget to take your *woman* along with you. Get out!'

" 'Get out—*hell!*' says he. He sticks his mug right in my face.

" 'That woman you speak so light of,' says he, 'is a queen. A Canuck queen,' says he.

"I had to laugh. 'Since when was there queens in Canada?' says I. 'And since when has the Canuck queens been usin' stove polish for talcum powder?'

"The guy grabs me by the coat. Listen. He was strong as a wire. He was deceivin'. A wire with ten thousand volts into it.

" 'Look at me!' says he, breathin' hard between his teeth. 'And take care!' says he. 'I'm a man no man can monkey with. I'm a man that'll go through. I'm stained with crime. I've waded through seas o' blood. Nothin' in heaven or earth or hell can stop me. A month from now rubes like you'll be glad to crawl at my feet—an' wipe their dirty mugs on the hem o' that there woman's skirt. . . . Now listen,' says he. 'Get the hell into that there box o' yourn over there and be quiet.'

"Crazy as a loon. I hope to die! the guy was *dangerous*. I see that. It come to me it's best to humor him, and I go into the coop again. I sit there countin' my fingers and listenin' to Denver tellin' back them car numbers to Limon again. By and by I'm jumpy as a cat. I get up and stick a record in the old machine. . . . That's what brings the whole thing back to mind. That record is this 'Paragon Park.'

"First thing I know I'm out in the waitin' room again. And what you think I see? I give you a hundred guesses. . . ."

"I'll take one," I said to him. "What you saw was the finest exhibition of the 'Shimmie' you ever clapped an eye upon. Am I right?"

The young fellow's mouth hung open. He stared at me.

"Half undressed! Honest! That nigger

woman! Horse blanket, feed sack, ar'tics—where was they? Shimmie? Say! Can you imagine, in that there prairie depot at three in the mornin', and a wind howlin' under the floor? Say! Well, I can't tell you, but talk about *Shimmie!* Say, she's like a dead one come to life."

"Yes," I agreed, "yes. . . . But what about the man?"

"Well, that man, now. The record's comin' to the end and I go back in to start it over. And here's this hobo, come in behind me.

" 'What's that?' says he, pointin' to the record I got in my hand.

"Then he grabs it and looks it over. He keeps turnin' it round and round and round, starin' at it.

" 'I hope you'll know it again,' says I, with a laugh.

"My laugh seems to set him off into a shiver. Then down he throws that record o' mine onto the floor and stamps on it; busts it into a million pieces under his boots. I've been tellin' you he's crazy.

" 'Here there!' I yell at him.

"He looks at me. Looks right through me, it seems, and beyond, with them there red-rimmed eyes.

" 'Seas o' blood,' says he. That's all. 'Seas o' blood!'

"Then he turns around, walks out into the waitin' room, and sits down in a heap in the farthest corner. Never another peep. There

he sits till daylight, and the nigger woman, with the horse blanket on again, she sits there beside him, holdin' his hand.

"'What's up with him?' I ask her.

"She says somethin' in Mexican—or some language, anyway. But I see she don't know any more 'n me. . . . It's just like this. The current's gone out o' the wire. . . . Last I ever see of 'em, she's leadin' him off in the sunrise toward the box cars—leadin' him by the hand. . . . Now did you ever hear a funnier experience than that to happen to a man?"

"No," I said, "I never did."

"You had to pity him," he added.

"Yes," I agreed. . . . And I could think of her leading him by the hand.

I saw Signet again. It was on my first and last voyage to the Marquesas. Under the shadow of a mountain, on a stone platform facing the sea, sat Signet, quite nude save for a loin cloth, and with an unequivocal black beard falling down on his breast. There was a calmness about him.

"How did you come here?" I asked, at length.

"She wanted it," he said.

"She's a wonderful woman," he said to me, "a wonderful woman. She would do anything for me, Dole. *Anything!* We've got a kid."

I made shift to get in a question I had carried long in mind. "Somebody beat you out at Papeete, then, after all?"

He turned upon me a faintly quizzical look.

"I mean, somebody saw her—some tourist—that time she danced at Papeete—Remember?—and got away with it?"

The thing seemed already so remote that he had to grope back. Then he laughed.

"Lord, no. Look here, Dole. It was her herself seen the thing at Papeete. On board a tourist boat. I found out about it since I learned her language good. Her and some others went aboard to dance the *hula*—same as always, you know. Then some of *them,* the tourists, understand——Well, they have to spring the latest thing from Broadway. And then this woman of mine——Well, you can imagine. Like a woman with a new hat. Got to run right off and show it to the whole damn length and breadth of the South Seas. That's all. . . . And once upon a time I thought I was bright. . . ."

Out of the half house at the rear of the platform came the daughter of a queen, bearing under one arm a prince of this island valley, and in the other hand a bowl of coconut wine for the visitor. And for her lord. For you will see that at last, despite the malignant thrusts and obstacles of destiny, this guttersnipe of Gotham had come to a certain estate.

When I left, he accompanied me slowly to the beach.

"You ought to like it here," I said. "After all, the city could never have given you so much."

"No," he said. Wide-eyed, he took in the

azure immensity of the sea. "No. Here a guy has got time to think, think, without any hurry or worry. . . . I been thinking, Dole, a lot. I ain't going to say nothing about it, but Dole, I believe I got an idea coming along. No flivver this time. A real, sure-fire hunch. Something that'll go big in the city. Big!"

And so I left him there in the shadow of the mountain, staring at the impassable sea. . . .

THE WHITE MAN

THE younger man hated the older with a passion which sometimes showed in a deep suffusion of his smooth, apple-red cheeks, although he would never have recognized it as hatred because of his innocence, his incredible and appalling west-of-Canada sinlessness. He never marveled. To the pure all things, even the river jungles of British Guiana, are as God intends—that is to say, matter of fact.

Then, too, Pawling believed in the brotherhood of man.

Clymer did not believe in the brotherhood of man. He may have had notions once upon a time, for he, too, had been reared in the west of Canada (where the cocoa estate of Holy Trinity was owned, and by most respectable people). But now he had been out here for upward of eleven years, a long time for a white man to be in the bush. If he had any faith left him, it was his one abiding belief, fed from time to time by premonitions, that the bats would get him—that is to say, when his hour struck. It would be some night when he should be too drunk to let down the bed nets, and when Tung, the Chinese house boy, should forget. He was growing stouter of late and quite purple, and

his left leg would not always behave, but this did not worry him much, for the reason he knew it was to be the vampire bats. He could hear them flitting in the room every night.

Sometimes he hated his new subaltern and sometimes he didn't. He could not be depended upon in an emotional way. Lying in his hammock on the veranda of an evening, after he had swallowed his tenth or his twelfth swizzle, he would break out in a thick, meaty passion:

"Why, in the name of God? That's all I ask—*why?* When I've been so good all these years. I've sweat blood. I've made 'em all rich up there, Pawling, rotten rich, the whole of 'em. And then to pay me, what do they send me? Eh? They send me out a mewling, puling, white-livered son of a prayer-meeting rat like you. *You!* God! Say, listen. I give you my word of honor, Pawling, you make me sick. Sick! D'y' hear? Sick! Damn it! Why couldn't they go the whole job and send me down a woman and be done with it? A white woman! Eh? That's the question I want you to answer me. For God's sake, Pawling, open your mouth once! Say something!"

Sometimes, veering as far toward the other pole, he would lurch from his hammock with tears in his eyes to slap Pawling on the back.

"You're a white man, Pawling! A white man, by God! A white man....I'm a white man. We're two white men, d'y' understand, Pawling, old fellow? Like brothers! And devil take all

the niggers and coolies and Chinamen on the river—we hold 'em in our hand! White men, d'y' understand, Pawling? Shoulder to shoulder, eh?"

And whether it was the one or the other, the younger man's cheeks and forehead grew dark with blood. Dim lusts surged through his brain —an impulse to kick Clymer's stomach—the desire to sink his nails in the plum-colored pulp beneath Clymer's eyelids. His mouth filled with saliva, and he had to spit several times into the poinsettias beyond the railing. Never by any chance did he reply. He kept his hands in his pockets and his eyes on the river.

The river exercised a peculiar fascination over his mind, a fascination which he would not have owned. By night sliding soundlessly under the mists that swallowed the farther jungle, one cool, sulphurous pencil mark of the moon perhaps showing where the surface lay; by day a vast, amber-colored, moving floor, marred only by the arrowing ripple of a tapir, or a crocodile asleep, or by a gold-boat far out on the flood, passing down to the faint, barbaric chant of the black paddlers—by day or by night, as he watched the river, Pawling fell prey to an illusion. It seemed no longer the broad plain of water that moved; it was rather he himself that moved, he and the front compound and the cocoa sheds and the thatched roofs of the East Indians, drawn slowly, by some occult and irresistible power, upward and upward,

hour by hour, effortless, helpless, away from the clean salt waters of the earth into the maw of the equator, full of fevers and creepers and hanging serpents.

He had a horror of snakes. It was his one weakness. Each night he looked under his bed, and he was always seeing big fellows in the dark, hanging head down from the branches of the cocoa trees. Once or twice, unable to resist the shivering desire, he discharged his shotgun at one of those heads, and brought down a ripe cocoa pod for his powder. He made nothing of this spiritual malady.

As for his queer feeling about the river, he did for that by telling himself that he liked the river. He liked it, he said, because it knew where it was going and went there, and nothing could stop it or swerve it from its course. He liked the same thing about himself. He hated sham, and he could see through it with a pitiless eye. He knew that when men went to pieces in the tropics it was simply because the tropics were an accepted excuse for going to pieces. Bush fever, as a rule, was a matter of too much gin in swizzles. He had many theories, wholesome, and informed by an austere optimism. One of his theories was that, viewed from the other end of eternity, Badhoor, the seller of Indian hemp in the coolies' range, was as good a man as Clymer—or as himself. . . .

He sat on a green-sap log beside the street of the coolie range and stared at the river. It

was full of the sunset sky, gold, with streaks of lilac. Unfamiliar odors attacked his nostrils—curry and sandalwood, goat dung, the aroma of strange supper-pots. Liquid syllables came to his ears: "Salaam, sahib! Yes, sahib!" as Clymer moved grumbling among the huts of mud and wattles on his business of the fortnightly inspection. He might have been struck with a certain wonder at finding the East here in the West, had he not been so suspicious of the emotion of wonder. His spirit stayed in its house. Men and women passed in a blur across his vision —bearded Mohammedans, brown women carrying brown babies; Hindu men, stooping, silent-footed, emaciated, like shadows cast by a candelabrum. From the blacks' range, down by the water's edge, there came the sound of a drum, *boom - boom - boom - boom!* Pawling thought about himself and his work. Three years in the bush. Two years, nine months, and five days more, and then he would be going back home to Canada, to Toronto and the fat berth in the Office. . . .

A coolie girl, standing a few yards away on the other side of the road, made a silhouette on the golden mat of the river. Pawling's gaze included her, as it included the pale little zebu cow grazing to the left, and Tung, the house boy, to the right, sitting cross-legged under a platform of bamboo and playing tricks with a green coconut. She was very young, fourteen, perhaps. Her ankles and legs were plump, as were her

brown arms, naked to the shoulders and laden with crude bracelets and bangles of silver. Her headcloth, sweeping in a pure curve down her back, across her thigh, and up again to the wrist of her left arm, lent her an illusion of bouyancy, a readiness for flight. Her face, in profile, was modeled in the soft, yielding contours of her race, the lips parted slightly to the breath which lifted her bosom in visible and uneven pulsations.

She was watching Tung at his elaborate play. He was a handsome fellow, sinuous, well muscled, with fine, ardent eyes under his slanting brows. He ignored the girl, and yet he did not ignore her. From time to time he shot a sidelong glance, making her lower her eyes. Once, laying down the coconut, he placed one hand on his hip and the other, flat-palmed, on the crown of his head. Then he turned slowly to face her, his eyes half closed. Her hand fluttered to her young breast and she seemed unable to look away.

The small pantomime was lost on Pawling. In his eyes, full as they were of the reflected sky, she remained but a darkish spot, separated from the rest of the universe by that boundary line which has been the chief and historic preoccupation of art. She was very young, and at the same time there was about her a singular maturity. His thoughts drifted easily from his work to its reward. Some day he would marry. He would marry a girl, probably, whom he did not yet know. She would be quite young—younger, at any rate, than he. She would be plump, but not too plump,

and she would have brown hair and white arms. They would take a house in Toronto with a lawn and a garden. She would have babies. . . . He was dimly aware of Clymer's voice somewhere, saying: "Not bad! I give you my word of honor!"

He remained engrossed in the golden vista and the train of thought which it induced. She would have very dark brown hair, soft to the touch. . . . Clymer's voice was louder and more insistent:

"Not *bad!* Not *half* bad! I say! I give you my ——"

Pawling looked up. Then he got up and stood stiff and straight on his meager, pipe-clayed legs. Heat came out of the sun-baked earth and ran over him in a wave, striking fire to his neck and jaws and upward across his face.

Clymer ran on with a venomous delight: "You're a smooth beggar. You're a smooth Christian beggar, Pawling."

He stood with his stomach thrust out, his arms akimbo, his finger tips meeting in the small of his back, his head tilting now to one side and now to the other in a heavy, birdlike estimation of the young figure across the road. A smile moved his lips, sarcasm giving way to a kind of paternal indulgence.

"All right. But look-a-here, who is she? Hang take it! . . . I say, ugly chap! You! What's your name, eh? Badhoor? Yes, yes, I remember now. I remember you well, Badhoor. Listen,

Badhoor, have you ever heard of *praedal larceny?* No? Well, they'll tell you what it means one day in the Demerara Sessions if you don't stop your cocoa poaching. Keep looking at me! That's right. . . . But just now, something else. You'll observe that Pawling Sahib has been looking at the bit of brown over there. Tell me, Badhoor, what's she called? Eh? What house? Eh? Come, come!"

Pawling wanted to turn quietly and walk away up the hill to the house. But, after all, it didn't matter enough. He was not even angry with Clymer. He had a moment of imagination. Here he was, and then there lay a vast, deep gulf, and there on the other side, very small, was Clymer. He folded his hands behind his back and looked at Badhoor. The seller of *hasheesh* was an old lean man with a big head and a gray beard. His legs protruded from his soiled loin cloth as black and thin as a wading bird's, and, like a wading bird, he stood on one foot, with the sole of the other resting on the inner face of the opposite thigh. When he closed his eyelids, as he did from moment to moment, he seemed but to veil his eyes, like an owl.

"Protector of the Poor," he mumbled.

Clymer began to bellow. *"Poor!* Will you hear that—*poor!* Selling *hasheesh* to all the wormy beggars in Holy Trinity and poaching cocoa into the bargain. *Poor!* But see here, I asked you a question!"

"Salaam, sahib, yes. Yes. She—she is called

Léah, sahib. Yes, sahib. But as the sahib sees, and as Pawling Sahib sees, she is nothing—a poor, ugly child of a dung-bitten cow-belly ——"

He veiled his eyes and remained standing on his one lean leg, dry, motionless, removed into another country. The bones of his chest betrayed no breath. The gold had gone out of the river and the sky, leaving the world to float in the violet-gray liquor of dusk.

Clymer's eyeballs seemed to swell, like tiny balloons, pressing out against their lids. He was not used to receiving advice in the ranges.

"Well, I *am* damned!"

Badhoor was shaken. He put down his other foot. "Salaam, sahib, Protector of the Old! I—I am a poor man, sahib, and she has no beauty. The sahib would not give two claps of the hands for her, sahib. She is my wife, sahib, these three days. Salaam, sahib, Protector of the Innocent, and sahib, Protector of the Poor!"

It was late. Pawling stood motionless in the shade of the last drying shed, his head and neck thrust out from the pale-blue collar of his pajamas, the pupils of his eyes, confused by the moon patterns among the cocoa trees, dilating moment by moment. With an absurd, elaborate caution he brought his gun up toward his shoulder. It was a fine weapon, a fine, twelve-gauge, repeating shotgun with his name plate on the stock, given him at parting by his fellow members in the High-

ditch Club. . . . He stared with one eye along the blue moon-fire on the barrel.

The recoil stung his collar bone; his ears were deafened; smoke made a white cloud before his eyes. He let all the breath out of his lungs with a grunt and felt better, as if a spring had been released. And after all it was only another cocoa pod. He could see it still hanging there on the lowermost branch of the third tree down, with a piece bitten out of the side. A jaguar coughed a mile away down river, and off in the back bush a troop of red howlers was swinging through the branches. He heard them in the hush following the gunshot. It seemed silly to remain standing here.

And yet he did not wish to return to the house —not until Clymer had gone to bed. He had stood about all he could of *that*. Up beyond the sheds and the compound he could hear the befuddled voice even now, carrying on to an empty chair an interminable, drunken rigmarole. No, he would not go back, on any account. He was afraid of himself, of what he might do to Clymer or say to Clymer. All the evening, till he had broken away, it had hung on his tongue to cry out: *You smut! You disgusting drunken smut!*" No, he would not go.

A sudden rain fell upon him while the moon still shone; one of those crystal peltings of the dry season which he had been warned to avoid as he would avoid poison. The night was heavy and hot; the raindrops were hot, too, but after-

ward the evaporation from his clinging pajamas lowered his pulse and soothed his nerves. He felt better, very much better. Clymer must have turned in now, for his voice was no longer audible.

Pawling went back between the sheds and across the pegging-ground. On the compound, streaked with the shadows of cabbage palms, he passed Tung, the house boy. He turned to look after him; the Chinese, at the lower end of the compound, had done the same. For a moment their eyes met across the streaks, and then, making a sign of respect, the house boy stole away downhill in the direction of the coolie range. It meant nothing to Pawling.

Clymer had not retired after all. As Pawling mounted the long steps to the veranda, a voice powerful and turgid came out of the depths of the hammock, resuming the threadbare burden:

"Bu'—bu' she's not *black,* y' un'erstan'—not black—like a nigger-black. No, no, no! White, Pawlin', white. Not *white,* y' un'erstan'. No, no—but *white.* Ary—Aryan. Tha's it. *Aryan.* Tha's what I been tryin' to —— Funny! 'Member g'ography. Aryan, white. White *enough,* anyway. 'Member g'ography ——"

Pawling raised on his toes and spat over the railing into the poinsettias. His neck cords throbbed with a dull pain.

"Good night," he said, and would have passed into the house had not Clymer, upending suddenly in his hammock, detained him. There is no tell-

ing what the man had it in his muddled brain to say, for the touch of Pawling's damp nightclothes sent him off on a fresh tack.

"Soppin' wet! Oh, my God! Standin' in rain. Fever—come down—fever —— Die! Oh, my God! Young man—young white man—dead —dead as a—a doornail! Oh, my God!" He began to weep, fat tears coursing down his fat cheeks. "Dead! Young white man dead as a —a doornail!" In a sudden access of compassion he staggered up and flung his huge, soft arms about Pawling's neck, bearing him down, sobbing, "Must take care o' young white man—like father—like father an'—an'—son ——"

Pawling fought with his teeth and nails and knees, smothered with flesh, sickened with stinking breath, making strange noises in his throat, panting, incoherent. He was free without quite knowing how, and Clymer was down on the floor, a soft mountain of remorse, wailing over and over again that he had been a young man himself once upon a time—a young man like Pawling—a young white man.

Pawling stood quite still with his knuckles pressed to his cheeks. For the first time since he had come into the tropics he was cool—cold. A breath of ice blew over him and he shivered. His whole frame was racked with shivering. His teeth pounded together.

"Y-y-you s-s-smut! Y-you—y-y-you s-s-s-smut!"

And then he ran, shuddering with the cold, into the dark of his own room. . . .

He was sorry he had said that when he found Clymer dead next morning, "dead as a door-nail" in truth, lying on his back on his bed with his arms stretched out and his mouth open.

It is strange, as he stood there in the dawn, with the chamber sweeping in dim circles about the fever of his head—it is strange that he was conscious of no touch of the irony of things. Clymer's hour had struck on the night of his prophecy, the night when he had been too drunk to arrange the bed-net, and when Tung had been about another business, and yet there was no mark of an incision on him, not one. Somewhere, deep under the rolling fat of his skull, a tiny vessel had given away with an infinitesimal "pop," and the vampires had left him to lie in peace, with his naked stomach confronting the ceiling and his mouth fallen open.

Pawling was thinking that it was too bad he himself had said what he had. The irony of that did not escape him—that he should have kept his silence so long, only to break it at last when a single moment more would have been enough.

Beyond the veil of his bodily discomfort he was conscious of three emotions—remorse for having called the man a "smut," horror of the presence of the body, and the sense of an awful isolation. He thought of the miles. A window opened in a by-chamber of his brain, showing him the miles—the river miles, crawling between the hot jungles, down and down, the estuary miles, a thin liquor of mud stretching without end, sweat,

mosquitoes, a fetor of swamplands; the sea miles, pleasant miles, days and nights and weeks built of blue miles cast on the reckoning; the miles by train, the wheat fields, towns, lakes, the night stops, cinders in the blanket folds, voices of trainmen outside the transom—miles, miles, thousands upon thousands of miles over which the tidings of a death in exile would creep very slowly—almost as slowly as if he were as far away from the world as the sun, where everything was burning up in molten fire—blistering—hot on the neck and cheeks and behind the ears. . . . Tung, the house boy, came running on his soft wicker soles to pick him up.

He refused to be ill. He was not a drinking man, not at all the sort to be bowled over by a touch of tropical rain. It was all bosh. He swore at the China boy for interfering with him and with his indomitable purpose—strange brothel-house oaths which had never before passed his lips or sullied his mind. . . . They got him into his bed. . . .

It was high day when he opened his eyes, for he could see the sun streaking the shutters with white threads. He watched the flies. They came in through the sun streaks and flew across his room and straight away across the big room beyond, and turned there and disappeared through the doorway into Clymer's room. He remembered, with a grunt of loathing. At the sound a white-clad negro appeared beside his bed, McCarthy, the undermanager.

"Yes, sir?"

"The flies. The—body."

"Quite right, sir." The man spoke in the respectful west London accents of the black colonial. "It was removed last evening, sir. I took the liberty. You were indisposed, sir."

Last evening? Oh, yes—I see. Last evening."

"Yes, sir. If you will be so good as to rest easy, sir. The doctor from New Roordam Estate should be here by night. I sent Quigley down river with four paddlers, sir, and they should ——"

"Doctor? Why the doctor? I'm all right. I tell you I'm all right."

"Surely, sir, surely. Capital, sir! The China boy is here, sir, and Quigley's woman is looking out. Thank you, sir."

The man receded. Tung's eyes were watching somewhere, not unkindly, not kindly, not anything. The wide, brown, merciful hand of Quigley's woman came hovering to blot out the world. . . .

There came an evening when he was himself again. His brain was swept clean of the mists which had led him groping and stumbling through the hours, and a divine, cool languor lay upon his body. He was himself and yet he was not himself. It was as if a husk had been stripped from him, leaving him naked to all the poignant perceptions of reality, a child at the mercy of wonder.

Propped in his chair on the veranda, he sat in judgment upon Badhoor, the hemp seller, who had been taken red-handed at last among the trees, with half a bag of cocoa beans still damp from the pod. His half-closed eyes rested upon the East Indian standing before him, erect, unmoving, unmoved, like a figure in wood, blackened and emaciated by time. More than anything else, he wondered at himself, sitting in judgment.

His ears throbbed with the lees of the quinine they had given him, like a drum beating without end. From beyond it came the voice of the undermanager carrying the indictment forward from period to period with his mellifluous precision.

"Yes," he murmured from time to time. "Yes, yes."

"If you might pardon, sir," McCarty ventured, "I rightly think it would be best to send him down river to the Sessions. I doubt, sir, he could put up with the flogging. A strong, well-fleshed man now—yes—quite right, sir. And after a bit they're fit for the work again. But, as you may see, sir, this chap ——"

"Yes—yes ——"

Pawling's eyes played slowly over the naked torso before him, modeled between the counter-fires of the moon on the one side, and on the other the faint yellow radiance from the lamp burning within the house—the intricate, gnarled arch of the rib structure, the muscles like sheaves of folded parchment, shadow-penciled, the sere

pectoral muscles, the arid subdivisions of the abdominals, the caverns eaten under the collar bones and above the crests of the pelvis.

His lips were slightly dry and his tongue ran over them. He had never seen a man flogged. He had seen the flogging-post, down beyond the compound, but he had never seen a naked man tied to it with his arms about it and his wrists bound together with a thong, making one shadow with the post on the dust. He was wondering what sort of a sound the lash would make—in the air, and when it struck; what sort of a mark it would leave on bone structures and on muscles like sheaves of folded parchment; what color the mark would be, at the instant, and later—say an hour.

His lips were dry again. He licked them. Then he discovered that he was shivering from head to foot, and, running his hand over his eyes, he cried out:

"What the devil, McCarthy! I tell you I'm tired out. To-morrow! I say—I'll think it over to-morrow! Now, now! That's enough!"

A wave of disgust swept over him. He closed his eyes tight to be rid of Badhoor and his naked whip meat. He heard them moving off, down the steps, across the compound, the negro's cowhide *alpargatas* slapping softly on the dust long after the East Indian's footfalls had merged with the silence of the night.

But this silence of the night was not a silence. When he had been alone with it a few moments

it began to touch the raw of his perception with its myriad voices. The mist rising in the river valley was woven with fine threads of sound—the snarl of a kill in the farther jungle, the single, hushed wailing of a poor-me-one, the cumulative impact of a hundred thousand twigs falling simultaneously upon the forest floor. A breeze, moving the "women's tongues" at the corner of the veranda, set the long pods to whispering. The only things silent in the tropical night were the serpents—fat gray adders, bushmasters coiled in the poisonous dark beneath the leaves, pythons, their bodies making no sound on the tree trunks or across the stems of swaying grasses. . . . Pawling lifted his voice:

"I say—Tung! Bring me my gun. Tung! I say—are you there? My gun—directly!"

And then, when the boy had come with the weapon, his shrinking eagerness to be abroad with the moonlit serpents was not a match for the languor of his body and mind, and, letting the gun rest against the railing, he lay back again and listened to the night.

A drum was beating in the coolie range just below, a shallow drum without resonance—*putt-putt-putt*—with a Hindu violin whining into the rhythm for a moment and out again, an orchestration incredibly nerve-strung and vanquished and acquiescent. The violin ceased. By and by the drum itself was quiet, and very faintly through the palm fronds the voices of women came up the hill to Pawling's ears, softly modu-

lated, alien, mysterious, bringing him to a strained attention, lifted on an elbow. He did not realize that he was holding his breath till the heart pounding against his ribs began to pain, and then he let it out with a half-scared, "What the devil!"

He sank back and turned his face the other way. He thought of the girl he was going to marry in the far-away north, in the far-away future, the girl he had never seen and of whom he knew only that her eyes and hair were to be dark brown and her neck and arms of a warm, creamy whiteness. Curious and pleasurable speculations floated through his mind. He thought of the coolie girl he had seen that evening by the river. It seemed a very long time—at the other end of memory. He could not think precisely how she had looked. Casting back, he was blinded by the sheen of the water, a round apple of vision against which she was but a darker core, escaping him when he tried to take hold of her with his eyes, fading out upon the gold, or retaining substance, but flowing into a hundred dissolving silhouettes, queer, blurred, womanish shapes. . . . She was so young and yet so oddly mature, and she was the wife of Badhoor. . . . He had never seen a man flogged—a naked old man. . . . He lifted suddenly on his hands, for he imagined he had heard footsteps beyond the railing.

The compound seemed empty at first sight, save for the black stripes of the palms running away from the moon. When his eyes had grown

more accustomed he saw the hemp seller, strangely mutilated by the shadows, perching on one bird-like leg at the farther edge of the black-and-white pattern, his beard sunk in his neck, his forearms crossed over his breast, motionless, dry, unquestioning.

But it was not Badhoor who had aroused him. It was some one on the steps, mounting toward the veranda. Pawling breathed through his mouth. The soft, laggard footfalls came nearer across the floor and stopped. When he turned his head he saw the girl called Léah standing at the foot of his chair, her head bowed slightly, her foreams crossed over her bosom, motionless, unquestioning, divided between the chill of the moon and the warm flame of the lamp within the house.

Pawling swallowed. He opened his lips and closed them again three or four times. It was absurd. "What are you—what —— Why are ——"

It was absurd. He did not want to be taken for a fool, and yet he was a fool, for it should be a simple matter to tell her to go away; it could be done in two words, or one word—*"Go!"*

He lay back with his fingers locked behind his neck and continued to stare at her, still breathing heavily through his mouth. For a moment his mind skipped and he seemed not to be looking at her, but at a hoarding in a new town among the wheat fields—peeping covertly under his cap

across a little waste of cans and ashes at a scene in colors advertising Turkish cigarettes—swinging his schoolbooks as he lagged past, his senses afloat in dim, ecstatic chambers veined with ice and flame. . . . The flame was on his face. . . . He became aware of Tung, the house boy, crouching in the shadow beyond Clymer's hammock, where he had come without any sound, and he flung a hand at him, savage with irritation:

"Get out of this! Hear me—what I say? You, I mean! Good *God!* Why—why—why good *God!* What d'you think ——"

It was monstrous, this intrusion. It was an incredible outrage, this gratuitous hanging-about of a serving-man. Pawling felt that he could kill him as he would kill a sand fly stinging his neck. He continued to glower and expostulate, "Why—good *God!*" as the boy retreated into the house and beyond his sight.

Groping for something or other of which he felt the need, he found it in self-pity. Just then he made the discovery that the world had cast him out—the people he knew, the civilization and the code of his youth. Once more his imagination ran over the tale of the miles racing, with a certain obscure avidity—the train miles, the thousands upon thousands of blue sea miles, the river. He felt himself obliterated by space, forgotten by all to whom he might perhaps have been important. The thought came to him that even Clymer, purple, weak-legged Clymer, by the very act of dying, had cast him out. The warm, sweet,

heavy air of the river bush enfolded the exile. . . . He leaned forward and spoke to the girl.

"Look at me," he said.

He saw her eyes lifted, dull with youth, acquiescent, lamblike.

"Aren't you—you ——" He began to stammer, not knowing how to finish. "Aren't you afraid —of—of me?"

Her shoulders drew together, and her eyes, abashed that the sahib should take the trouble to address her, sought his boots. She seemed in doubt as to whether she had been commanded to smile for the sahib; her lips curved nervously and drew straight again. Her whole gesture, making a molehill out of this mountain of his youth, attacked his integrity as a subtle and potent wine.

"Look at me!" he whispered. His teeth were chattering. "Look at me, I say!"

She did as he bade with the incorruptible docility of a machine, and then her eyes drifted back again to the lighted doorway and remained there, as if fascinated, her bosom lifting the tight jacket of flame-color in visible and uneven pulsations.

Pawling opened his mouth, and then, without speaking, he closed it again. His face changed color, becoming mottled and sickly. He leaned forward in his chair, quietly, as far as he could, but he could not see. Letting himself back again, he reached out and took the shotgun in his hand. After a moment he got to his feet. When he had reached half-way to the open door a fit of shiv-

ering seized him, so that he had to cling with both hands to the heavy gun, and a cry broke from his lips:

"Tung! Go! If you're there—get away—out of that room—out of the house—quick! *For God's sake—man!*"

A shadow flickered across a farther wall, and he heard a door opened and closed. Tears of revulsion poured down his cheeks.

"Heavens!" he whispered. "What was I—Heavens!"

He saw the girl in a mist, shaken out of the apathy of her generations, staring at him and his tears. He saw the flowing contours of her neck and her brown shoulder, the golden starring in her left nostril, the heavy jewels of her arms and ankles dull in the moonlight; with his breath he took in the faint, mingled exhalations of her clothing, musk, and American rose water. Sinking down on the foot of the chair, he buried his face in his hands.

"Go away!" he said. "For God's sake, go away!"

He heard her bare soles retreating across the boards. He had been drawn back from the edge of a precipice, and his whole racked nervous fabric cried out for the opiate of prayer. Under the ecstasy of his redemption the devil was made flesh for him in the likeness of Clymer, leering between benignant, purple lids and reiterating: "White—Aryan—Aryan —— White *enough*—anyhow ——"

He thrust his hands away and opened his eyes to be rid of that insidious canvassing, and found himself staring at the place on the boards where she had stood. The silence oppressed him. The wall of the dark hemmed him in. He listened to the blood throbbing in his ears like a barbaric drum, *boom-boom-boom-boom,* like a drum beating from the heart of a waiting and breathless night, *"Fool—fool—fool—miserable, shivering, cheated fool!"*

He got to his feet and strained his eyes across the maze of the compound, but she was not there. The empty dust mocked him. . . . She had gone very quickly. The thought came to him that she must have run, and after that he wondered whether she would have run from him had he been Tung, the house boy, the indentured servant, cleaning slops at three shillings the month. His face grew sick again with jealousy; a blotch of white showed on one cheek as if he had been slapped; his hands wrung the iron barrel of the gun.

He stood quite still, listening. After a moment he turned his eyes downward and to the right, but he could not see through the thick tent of the poinsettias.

He went down the steps with an absurd and elaborate care. A thin froth gathered on his lips and he paused twice, long enough to brush it away with the back of his hand. Gaining the dust at the bottom, he turned toward the corner of the house to the right and stood with his feet

planted far apart and his head thrust forward on his neck.

When the house boy saw him standing there he took his hands from the girl's head, where they had been resting quietly, palms down, and ran out across the compound. He was a strong fellow and he ran swiftly through the barred light, flickering between the sights on the gun-barrel like a figure on a worn-out cinematograph film.

The compound was full of thunder. The smoke made beautiful flowers for Pawling, blooming one after another in the moonlight. He whispered nonsensical things between the shocks which bruised his shoulder with an exquisite violence.

When he was done, strangely, he felt no horror, no remorse, but rather as if a spring had been released. He seemed born again, into another country. He turned his back on the compound and walked toward the girl, who stood quite still, awaiting him, her hands folded against her bosom. . . .

I met this man Pawling in the second war year. He had been down to Demerara to offer himself for a commission in the local forces, but the examiners had turned him back on account of his heart and his legs. At the estate of Holy Trinity he was an agreeable and tireless host, making me more than comfortable. When I protested, he protested in turn, telling me with

a rare smile that it was a pleasure to see a white man on the river. He was growing rather stout and puffy, but, as I had heard it said in Demerara, and as he told me himself, he had "sent a power of bean down that river, first and last."

During the evening, which we spent on the veranda, I asked him if he had ever thought of going home.

"I used to," he said. "I used to. Yes." He lay in silence for a few moments, watching the river. "Only it's hard to get anybody out here —anybody fit for it, I mean—a young fellow that will shake down into the berth. It's not for all. I had a young chap from Vancouver two seasons ago—afraid of snakes ——" He was silent again. "I was afraid of 'em myself once," he resumed, preoccupied with memory, "like Adam, I suppose. . . . I got over it though—like Adam, I suppose."

After a little he clapped his hands and, when the mulatto house boy came on his silent feet, asked me again if I wouldn't "have one."

"No?" he echoed, absent-mindedly. "Well— Cheer-o!"

He carried his liquor well. He repeated that it was a pleasure to have a white man about— a young white man like myself. When I arose to retire he begged me not to go. His speech was becoming just a hint congested. He didn't want me to go. He wanted to shake hands with me, because, as he said, I was white—"damn white"—and so was he. He retained my hand in

his soft, perspiring grip, and when I took it away finally he burst out weeping. Even after I had gone into my own room I could hear him beyond the shutters.

"LA GUIABLESSE"

ONCE upon a time he had been white; you knew that. Gazing down idly from the eminence of the Royal Mail in some azure roadstead of the islands, you may have seen him gazing back at you as idly from the blistering deck of his schooner.

As long as you cared to stare at him he stared at you. He had nothing else to do. He would be waiting for lighters and lighter-boys, his business interrupted by the coming of your huge, smoke-grimed, iron-skinned *bom*-ship from the north; waiting silently and without pain till God chose to move you on again over the purple rim of the world—as one learns to wait in the Caribbees.

Or again, you may have seen him as I saw him once, passing across the trade wind in the swift splendor of a tropic dusk, his sails amazingly pink against a sea colored like a peacock's breast, his deck load of fruit—limes and mangoes and shaddock from the Guiana river bottoms—giving back the level rays in a thousand tones of vert and chrome, a negro, his blue-black torso naked to the waist, standing at the wheel behind him, and another as red as raw gold paring yams on the house. Like another argosy

of gold and gossamer she passed swiftly away and vanished in the deepening shadows where the mountain of Grenada burned faint and fainter above the onrushing night.

And to the last, I am sure, Johnson leaned there unstirring, his forearms crossed on his sleeping box and his large, brown, heavy-lidded eyes fixed upon us with an expression of somnolent disdain.

He had been a white man once upon a time, and in his own country he had loved and been beloved of a woman. Frailty was her name. It had taken him an absurdly long time to find this out. He might have done something violent. In place of that he vanished. First there was the briefest sort of an interview, in which he pointed out to her with a passionate and prophetic clarity the inevitable course of all her future career, and then, as I say, he vanished, quietly, completely, and came away to be a white man all alone. Had you told him now that he was no better than a Quashie black man, that already he had fallen under another, the darker and yet more blighting dominion of a ship, I am sure he would have laughed at you.

As to the schooner, she, too, was an exile. I cannot say where she had come from, precisely, but from the curve of her cutwater and the set of her masts, dividing the room fairly, like the eyes in a man's face, I can make a guess that in her early days she had gone home to Provincetown or Gloucester with her black hull full of ground-

fish and the rime of the Georgias frosting her bows.

But now she was white, as white as a northern snowbank from water to tops, as befits an exile trading in the islands of pitiless light. He kept her well, that must be admitted. He used to say of her that many men had had her; that now, when the charm of her youth was gone and she had come to him in a far land where no one knew her, a bit the worse for wear, just a bit *passé*, you understand, he would be good to her. And as he said this he allowed a faintly ironical smile to play about the corners of his lips and shrugged his shoulders ever so slightly, as if he were thinking perhaps not quite of her, but of some one else.

A ship, at best, is a queer kind of woman. I am inclined to believe there was never a queerer one than this schooner of Johnson's. Lovely, yes; illogical, crochety, stubborn, and (as it turned out) infinitely jealous. One has heard of man-killing ships, of ships with a taste for a certain wind and a distinct aversion to all others, of ships willing and unwilling, faithful, treacherous, and of ships prone to nostalgia. But I, at least, have never heard of another craft that, taking an unaccountable dislike to a certain place, refused consistently thereafter to be lured or dragged or driven into the neighborhood of that place.

Call it coincidence, if you will. Johnson did, at first. But the fact remains that for a space

ranging upward of fifteen months the British island of Dominica was dropped from the schooner's more or less regular route of call; the coco-palms parading the beach looked out no longer in the dawn to find her slim, snowy presence at rest upon the mirror of the roadstead, nor was the voice of "Bigboy" Johnson heard again over the tinkling glasses in the green sepulchral cavern of Sutro's warehouse on the quay of Roseau.

Neither was it any fault of Johnson's, nor of his factor's. Indeed, Sutro's last words as he stood on the beach were, "I say, old man, you won't fail me?" And to him, from the dinghy that drew away swiftly under the strong oar-strokes of black Siza and gold-red 'Ti Josef, Johnson's words came rolling back: "My word on it, Sutro! Look for me the first week in July!"

When it came as far as the *third* week in July, the factor took himself to the corrugated-iron cable-office. But send where he might—Bridgetown, French Islands—Port of Spain—no one could give him news of Johnson and the schooner. None of them was aware that at that moment, in the blind, white loneliness of the Grenadines, Johnson and his boys were "sweating blood" to get the vessel off the sandy beach where, most unaccountably, on the brightest of moonlit nights, she had somehow managed to run herself aground.

Late that year, toward the end of the rains,

Sutro sent a cablegram which found Johnson lying behind the mole at Bridgetown, Barbadoes. It read:

Important you should call here earliest opportunity.

The same evening he had an answer:

Am sailing immediately.—JOHNSON.

It is not a long run from Barbadoes—sixty hours at the worst. Little more than that had elapsed when he received the wire:

Disabled; have put in Fort-de-France.

The factor began to lose patience. Three days later the cable gave him to know, briefly, that Johnson, with a broken steering-gear, had taken a tow back to Barbadoes.

Once after that, when winter was gone and the rains set in again, Sutro went up the pig-littered alley to the cable office.

Most important you should call here immediately.

he sent into the unknown.

Immediately.

This time Johnson answered from the waterfront at Demerara in British Guiana, on the mainland:

Just now loading jute for Dominica. Will sail in three days.

And this time it was the whip end of the spring hurricane that caught him off the coast of St. Vincent and sent the schooner limping home, ragged and splintered, and her cargo fit only for the ministrations of the underwriters, into the basin at Bridgetown.

This time, at least, you will say it was not her fault. A matter of coincidence, pure and simple, a catastrophe which would have occurred to the schooner had she been steering to any one of a dozen other islands in the archipelago. . . . I am sure Johnson called it nothing but that as yet. No, as yet his proud, disdainful spirit would "have no truck with niggers." He probably laughed to himself in that indolent, sardonic way of his as, lying full length on the deck house through the watches of a white night, he listened to 'Ti Josef, the red boy from Catholic Guadeloupe, and John Bull, the brown boy from Episcopalian Grenada, comparing murmurous theories and suspicions in the waist below him.

The good Protestant expressed it as his opinion that the island had been "dressed"; that some old black witch-doctor had set a sorcery against the schooner's coming—a long, low, heathen-hearted rigamarole of "Obeah-bags" and "spell-water" and the bodies of drowned cockroaches.

At all of this the good Catholic would shake his head, and lift his eyes to the topsails swimming small and pale against the moonstruck sky. And then, moved, perchance, by a sense of her

soaring and majestic mien, he would begin to recite the dogma of the "devil woman"—*La Guiablesse.*

As he spoke, making the sign of the cross from time to time over his naked breast, his voice seemed to emerge by degrees from his throat and hang before his palate, advancing and receding in the bony roof of his mouth with a monotonous beat of syllables, like the rhythm of a wide and shallow drum pounding in the heart of a jungle night. . . .

And one saw the tall, sleek, satiny woman, the goblin-woman, moving soundlessly in the white hush of noon. . . .

"La Guiablesse! Ah oui!"

Squatting on the moonlit deck, his gold-red body swaying slowly, his head thrown back, and his eyes fixed upon the gossamer flesh of that towering and lonely creature, the ship, the grandchild of the Congo repeated it again and again: *"La Guiablesse! La Guiablesse!"*

Johnson, sprawled on the house, laughed silently to himself and shook his large, unkempt head, as much as to say, "Can you beat that, now? A white man will never be able to get at the bottom of these children of darkness—never!"

But once, when on a night like this the schooner was standing north for Marie Galante, and a little to the west of them Dominica itself lay outspread in full, pale view, Johnson forgot to laugh.

He had been watching it for an hour, perhaps, his eyes half closed and his chin propped in the

heels of his hands. Buried in fancy, he had been thinking how like an animal it looked, sleeping there on the sea; one protruding, velvet hip, a gaunt barrel, a high bulwark of shoulder, a short, thick paw shielding the slumbering head. Beyond the veil of his reverie the voice of 'Ti Josef carried on and on, advancing and receding, touching with its colorless and insidious pulsations the nervous fibers of the man who had been white. . . .

Johnson roused himself with a half-strangled oath and thrust his head over the edge of the house.

"Quit it!" he yelled. "I tell you, quit it!"

In the bland light he saw their faces lifted, their thick brown lips half parted, their disconcerted eyes scrutinizing him palely.

"Good God Almighty! All this infernal claptrap! This jungle-nigger babble that never ends!"

His discomfort increased;

"Look here! I've had enough of it. I'll show you. When we're cleared in Marie Galante I'll bring her back here and go in to that island. Understand? I'll run her into the roads there, fair and square, and we'll hear the end of this. Now that's enough!"

Turning away, he rolled over on his back again and stared at the sky. His face reddened slowly under its tan.

"Say!" he muttered. "I'll be getting as bad as a nigger."

He was ashamed of himself without quite knowing why, and altogether uncomfortable.

"What the devil? What's ailing me?"

I have the story of what happened in Demerara six months later from a man named Malverde. Malverde, a mulatto, half-owner and manager of a large chandlery establishment in River Street, is a person of education and of considerable native acumen. Of his shrewdness in the way of judging character it is enough to say, perhaps, that he has prospered in a credit business on a tropical river. When he says that there had been a great change in Johnson since his last appearance in the river (some eight or nine months before) one may be sure he knows what he is talking about.

He says he was shocked. After the custom, he had Johnson up to the cool Captain's Room on the second floor of his emporium. There, ministered to by the soft-footed China boy, it was their habit to talk, lazily and at large, surrounded by the wide, uneasy hush of the city noon, toying half-heartedly with the mist-rimmed glasses of lime and rum till the breeze sprang up again and business affairs became tolerable.

Malverde had always liked Johnson; that is to say, he had always trusted him, admired him, and perhaps envied him a little that quality of aloof disdain, of cool and painless separation from the ambitions and complexities of life, and especially from that particular group of human

aspirations conveniently symbolized in "wine, women, and song."

"But he was not the same chap, sir. Jolly quick I saw that. . . . By two o'clock in the afternoon, I give you my word, he was drinking like a lord, like a lord, sir."

He had not begun his lordly drinking right away, it seems. For a while, in the languorous twilight of the room, he had sat in his long chair listening to Malverde's small talk curiously mute, gray, inattentive, relaxed. So he had continued according to the evidence, until Malverde began to "talk business." Of course, the ship chandler had something in train for him (had been awaiting his arrival for a month, in fact).

"I understand," he said to Johnson, "that your factor, Sutro, is on the lookout for a deal in jute just now. I happen to have the goods in hand. You could take it on in the stream and be at Dominica in six days' time, and a jolly pretty thing for all concerned. What?"

Johnson, still stretched out in his attitude of somber separation, gazed at the ceiling and answered, slowly.

"No," he said. "You're one jump too late, Malverde. Sutro's had that fixed up in Barbadoes —almost a month a go. Thom & Knight handled it."

The ship chandler was surprised and disconcerted. He was more deeply shocked than before. Having Sutro's week-old letter in his

pocket, he was in a position to know that Johnson had told a lie. Being a business man and at the same time a gentleman, he could do no more than mention the fact of the letter as casually as possible, with the still more casual comment that there must have been some mistake—somewhere or other—on Johnson's part. And now, the misapprehension having been cleared up, what did he say to the proposition?

But Johnson had got up and gone to the balcony. There he stood staring out over the housetops to where his schooner lay at anchor in the stream, staring at her (as Malverde expresses it) "in the rummest way imaginable." The ship chandler began, as he says, to be "a bit fed up with it."

"Well," he persisted, coughing slightly behind a hand, "and what do you say?"

Johnson heard him. Coming back from the balcony, he resumed his chair and lifted the glass of lime and rum which the China boy had just refilled. His face was the color of ivory, and his teeth seemed to be knocking gently together.

"What do I say?" he echoed. "I say that this is damn good stuff, Malverde, old man!"

With that he drained it and clapped his hands for the boy again. His course from then on may best be left to the ship chandler's words and the gesture with which he accompanies them:

"You may imagine, sir. I was quite helpless. I am not prepared, here, in my own house, as

you might say, to—well—to put a lock on the sideboard. . . . And by two o'clock, as I say, sir, he was quite thoroughly befuddled."

In the end Malverde had to ask him to go. Some of his more respectable clients were coming into the place, and Johnson had begun to mumble into his glass—an interminable, half-coherent rigmarole about a woman named Minna, a woman who had deceived him, "double-crossed" him, and, somehow, incomprehensibly, driven him out to this God-forsaken hole of the world. When he had been sober he had stared at his ship; when he was drunk he talked about a woman. He continued to talk about her when the ship chandler, having received no reply to his request that he get out, and being withheld by some remnant of friendly shame from having the China boy do it, led him in person down the dark back stairs of the establishment.

In the close, sticky gloom of the descent his voice echoed, loud and full of self-pity. It was evident that his mind had relapsed into the past. He told this imagined woman that she might go the way she had chosen, that it might be nice now with this one, but that there would be a next one not quite so nice, and a next one, and so on, down and down and down, till she came to the end of her rope.

Malverde had him out of the back door by that, and into the blank sunlight of the dock. But he was not yet done with him. Johnson, holding the door open with one hand and imprecat-

ing him wildly with the other, addressed him with glazed and evidently unseeing eyes.

"And when you come to the end of your rope, I know how it 'll be, Minna, my girl! You'll come crawling back to me, and I'll have to be good to you. Yes, damn my soul ——"

Malverde tells me he got the door closed then.

"Shameful? Rather! We had always been friends. I give you my word I should jolly well rather have lost a hundred pounds—a thousand!"

But as it turned out, the rupture in that five-year-old friendship, distressing as it had been, was not complete. On the evening of the day following, Malverde met Johnson on the sea-wall, where he had gone to hear the band.

I say they met. In reality it was not a question of meeting. Johnson, overtaking him from the rear, gave him a friendly greeting and fell in step. It became evident to Malverde that one of two things had happened; either Johnson had been so far gone yesterday that the whole episode had failed to leave a trace in his memory, or else he had come so low that it made no difference. Perhaps the truth lay between them.

If he recollected anything, Johnson's only reference to it was hidden in the casual bit of information which he offered as they walked along.

"I've had the fever. Don't know whether you knew, Malverde. Yes, seven weeks of it. Bad time. I don't amount to much these days."

The other, always a gentleman, and not en-

tirely certain as to what was expected of him, murmured that he was sorry to hear it.

"But then," he went on, "it was long overdue you. You're apt to be a jolly sight better for it in the long run. Cleans the blood out."

"Yes." Johnson nodded his head thoughtfully. They walked on in silence, their white-garbed figures floating ghostlike through the gloom. "Yes," he repeated, "it's cleaned my blood out, I guess; washed out all the old red things that trouble a man, that keep him restless and uncomfortable, and—well—white. Yes, I suppose I'm all right now. I suppose I'm branded now—as good as a Creole now, I guess."

He said this, not with his old laugh and shrug of irony, but as a matter of fact, wistful, and at the same time acquiescent. Put rather more at his ease by the tone, the ship chandler suggested that they take a seat. They found one not far from the band stand, where an artificial twilight flowed over them from the clustered arcs.

"I say"—Malverde returned to the subject which, as a man of business, he could not very well afford to abandon—"and what about the little matter for our friend Sutro? You'll remember we were speaking of it yesterday when —ah—we were interrupted, you know."

"No, I didn't know." Johnson looked at him calmly. "I didn't know we were interrupted. And I had it in my head, somehow, that I told you I couldn't do it—couldn't go to that island."

"Ah?" Malverde was taken by surprise. "By

Jove! I did not know. There has been some trouble with Sutro? I had not heard."

"No, no trouble with Sutro. It's a simple matter of geography. Being an island, a man's got to go there in a ship, and if a man's ship won't go to that particular island, why ——" He lifted his palms, as much as to say, "Why, there you are."

Malverde was at a loss. As he puts it: "Fancy my position. We had been friends. . . . Well, sir, to make a long story short, I told him quite frankly that he had been drinking too much."

Even at this charge, bald as it was, Johnson betrayed no anger. His calm grew, if anything, deeper, more solicitous, more indecent. Leaning over and tapping Malverde's knee with a forefinger, he went on:

"Do you know what happened the last time I tried to go there in the schooner? No? Well, I'll tell you. She tried to kill me, in broad daylight, in cold blood. No doubt of it. There were witnesses. Ask Siza. Ask John Bull."

He paused, not so much for effect, but as if to pin the other down the more firmly with his long, solicitous forefinger.

"It was like this," he went on. "I was coming out of Marie Galante in ballast. I said to myself, 'Now I'll see what there is in all this claptrap about that island and this ship and me.' I don't know whether you knew, Malverde, but there had been a lot of talk. Among the niggers. I had a little boy from the French islands

called 'Ti Josef. He was the worst. He called her *La Guiablesse*. Well, it's hard to make you understand; I haven't the words. But you got the feeling anyhow, to hear him, that that schooner was really a woman, or more like the spirit of a woman, a tall, white beautiful, and bedeviled woman—and that *I* was the one bedeviled. That she wanted me to herself; that she kept her woman's eye on me; that she had me, well, let's say, pretty well under her thumb. And that, womanlike, there was something in Dominica she mistrusted—in connection with *me*, you understand. Sounds silly! But hang it!"

Johnson edged an inch or so nearer on the bench.

"Listen, Malverde. I came out of Marie Galante and laid south by east, thinking to fetch around the south'ard end of Dominica. 'Once for all!' I said. 'Ti Josef came to me. 'Don't do it!' he said. He was scared—you could see that, Malverde, scared to death. You could see it in his eyes. If a red boy could grow white, he was white. He fell to work crossing himself; got down on his knees and begged me not to do it."

"I wouldn't listen. I'll never forget I wouldn't listen to him. I thought I knew everything. Coming clear of the south'ard end of Dominica, I hailed all hands to stand by to luff. I put the helm hard a-weather. 'Once for all!' I said.

"Well, she came around—slow—too slow. I remember the French boy begging, 'Don't do

it, sir!' but just then my eye fell on a free end of the main-boom lacing afoul the galley pipe. I didn't want the galley pipe carried away when she jibed over, you know, and I yelled at Josef to clear it, he was nearest. He looked at the house, but he never moved. I was mad. But there was no time. She was still coming around —slow. Seeing him still standing there, scared stiff, I suppose, I ran and jumped on the house myself. I guess that jarred him, for he was right after me, squealing something about his *Guiablesse,* his interminable *Guiablesse.*

"Well, she must have come faster all of a sudden. I didn't see, but I heard Siza yell. I knew. I fell flat, right flat down on the house. And as I went I felt the boom going over me; I felt the wind of it, I tell you, on the back of my neck—*whish!* Wicked! Yes, I was too quick for her. But if you knew how wicked it was—and how deliberate!

"When she fetched up I thought she'd tear the mast out of her. I got on my feet and looked around. 'Where's Josef?' I asked. Siza and John Bull were looking alee with their mouths open. And when I looked there I knew where 'Ti Josef had gone. *He* hadn't been quick enough, you see.

"We never got him. That boom must have broken his back like a wheat straw. We came about and looked for him, but we never got him. He had begged me not to do it, begged me on his two knees. And I wouldn't listen. And he got what was meant for me! . . . I laid a course for

Bridgetown. That was where I had the fever. . . ."

In the following silence, filled with diffused and inconsequential sound—the vagrant, brassy pulse of music, the slow slapping of surf, the shuffling of feet, and low confusion of promenaders' voices, Johnson sat staring down at his own knees.

"Why?" he asked, at length. "What is it in that island?"

"Perhaps it's a woman." For the first time in their acquaintance a hint of irony crept into the mulatto's voice.

Johnson lifted his eyes and looked at the ship chandler, calmly. "A woman? No, there's nothing in that, Malverde. I —— It sounds like the cheapest sort of melodrama, I know—but I guess I'm done with women, Malverde."

He went on without passion or especial emphasis:

"Have you ever heard of what they call the 'double standard of morality'—the one for men and the other for women? Well, anyway, I used to be down on it. I used to argue for hours; It seemed to me unfair and abominable and indecent. Until I ran up against it—well—much nearer home. No, Malverde, I guess I'm done with women. And so ——"

His voice died out. He got to his feet abruptly, awkwardly, his face flushing in the faint light.

"By jingo!" he stammered. "Well, I—I'll be damned!"

Looking up, Malverde beheld a stranger turning out of the crowd. He saw a typical British Colonial padding forward in his slightly bulging linen suit, a large white Panama pushed back on his thinning hair, a cigarette dependent between his drooping mustaches, and the never-failing black-cotton umbrella tucked under his arm. And he too was exclaiming: "By Jove!" and, "I say, Bigboy! I'll be damned!"

"See here," he went on, as he shook Johnson's hand. "I've a bone to pick with you. You had my letter?"

"Letter?" Johnson echoed.

"At Grenada. I heard you were looked for there in June."

"No, I was down with the fever in Barbadoes. No, I didn't get your letter." Johnson shook his head. "By the way," he shifted, "you know Malverde, don't you? Malverde, you're acquainted with Sutro?"

At the name of the Roseau factor Malverde was on his feet.

"Oh, by George! Surely!" He smiled, showing his extremely white teeth. "By correspondence, though—in a business way. Charmed!"

And then, breaking in smoothly on the other's return of the compliment:

"I say, Mr. Sutro, you'll be glad to know I have that little matter of jute in hand now. As I was saying to Bigboy ——"

"Yes, yes, indeed!" It was Sutro's turn to interrupt. "Quite right, surely; but to-morrow

—to-morrow! Thanks, awfully. And now, Big-boy, I'm amazed. I —— That puts another light on the matter, altogether. So you hadn't my letter—at all! Mmmm! So! By Jove!"

Naturally the ship chandler's feelings were not of the pleasantest, but being a gentleman and feeling himself "quite obviously a bit in the way," he made his excuses and departed. As he moved off, however, down the turf-covered embankment in the shade of the double row of mahogany trees, he could not help catching the sound of Johnson's voice.

"W-h-a-t?"

It was not loud. Against the background of all the small, chaotic murmurings of the night it sounded scarcely more than a whisper. And yet it had in it a quality, somehow, of stentorian and commanding appeal:

"W-h-a-t? S-u-t-r-o!"

Malverde took a tram home to his lodgings in Queen Street and went to bed and to sleep. It could not have been more than five in the morning, tree frogs piping and the night mist still overhanging the canals, when he was aroused by a voice and a thumping on his blinds. At such an hour the complaisance of even the most complaisant man is apt to be at its lowest ebb.

Nor was Johnson's proposal, called in through the blinds, calculated to restore it, being no less than this—that he, Malverde, should turn out, dress himself, and come down to his warehouse in River Street. At five in the morning! What

Johnson wanted was salt fish (a small quantity), two hams, a dozen of tinned milk, and fifty kilos of yams. And all this immediately! In an hour's time, he said, he must be out of the river.

"But my—my *dear chap!*" The ship chandler, pale-pajamaed and irate, let out his exasperation. "But my *dear chap!*" he called through the blind. "You can't be serious. You can't be off like this. My jute! What of my jute? For of course it's Dominica?"

"Who said so? Who said it was—that island? Hush up! My men are here, waiting; so for Heaven's sake don't go off half-cocked like that any more. And get a move on. Come!"

"But my jute!" the other continued to insist. "And Sutro! Take my word for it, when Sutro hears of this ——"

"Sutro is here with me."

Malverde, peeping through the blind, was disconcerted, puzzled, and more than ever "fed up with it all." He began to dress hastily, calling out from time to time: "Yes. Well, well! Presently! Presently!"

About the departure of any ship, any fragile, man-made shell whatever of skin or wood or iron, wheeling outward, withdrawing, diminishing, merging by imperceptible degrees with the mystery and the brooding and implacable immensity of the ocean, there can never fail a sense of romance, a moment instinct with the illusion of wild and adventurous heroism touched with

pathos. . . . About the departure of Johnson's ship in the heart of the dead-hot tropic dawn there was all this, and there was something more, a kind of an especial pomp and circumstance of mystery, of blind presumption and confidential haste.

Even to Malverde there came a momentary sense of poetic and uneasy wonder as he stood with Sutro on the mud-caked dock watching Johnson away. It crowded out even his disgruntlement, dulled even the edge of his resentment at what he called "being kept so infernally in the dark about the whole bally undertaking." For a moment, as the schooner, swinging slowly across the stream, came in strong silhouette against the flaming mountain of dawn, he was moved by a sense of admiration, foreboding and pity. For she rode high on the water, as light and unreliable as a feather. Johnson had come into the river laden down. Now, in his haste, he had not so much as a bag of sand in her.

Malverde mentioned it to Sutro in a tone half-petulant, half-awed.

"It's quite mad! He'll be jolly lucky, you know, not to lose her before he's half there—and himself in the bargain."

"Yes," said Sutro, not removing his somber gaze from the schooner. "But after all, I can't say that it matters much —— Blast it!"

And Malverde, glancing around, was dumfounded to see a large, bright, perfectly spherical tear-drop trembling in the corner of the man's

eye. The ship chandler was embarrassed. The thing was so unexpected, so (as it were) uncalled for, in a paunchy, leathery, bald-pated island factor like Sutro. Sutro struck the moisture away with a pudgy hand.

"Confound it! Malverde, but I liked that chap! No end! I shouldn't have told him, Malverde!"

"I beg pardon? Shouldn't have told him—*what?*"

"Why, bless my heart!" Sutro blinked his eyes with an apologetic recollection. "You *don't* know, do you? I say, the sun begins to tell a bit. If we could get under cover somewhere—where we might talk. . . . What? . . . Oh, thanks. Quite right!" And, giving a last look at the schooner, already no more than a vague loom on the farther reaches of the muddy, red-flecked river, he turned and followed the other into the shadow of the great cool warehouse. "Yes, a blasted awkward, deplorable business—for all concerned!"

For an hour his voice could be heard, occasional and fragmentary, floating down from the latticed balcony of the Captains' Room. . . .

". . . But you may fancy my position. My responsibility. . . . An island of that sort. And for upward of a year. . . . Yes, that was all quite natural. I was her only point of departure. She had been to the Royal Mail in New York. Quite natural. It was known there that I was her husband's factor in the islands. What more

logical? . . . But you must see, Malverde, I was always looking for the beggar to turn up any moment. And so I would tell her; 'This week,' I would tell her, or 'Sometime within a fortnight, surely'. . . . Yes, a blasted awkward bit of business for the lot of us, I say. . . . Thanks! Make the better part soda if you will. . . ."

It grew toward night of the third day. The sun had set, or, rather, swinging low to the western water, it had seemed of a sudden to let go and plunge, a sullen, red, lop-sided plummet, beneath the surface of the sea. For a moment a dome of pinkish light stood up halfway to the zenith in the eastern heaven; for a moment its effulgence warmed the windward slopes of the waves and touched with rose the spiring canvas of the schooner; then abruptly it was gone, too, and an immeasurable shadow overlay the ocean.

John Bull, the brown boy, came aft along the weather-side of the house.

"Yes, sah," he began, addressing himself to the master at the wheel, his head bowed in the extremity of diffidence—"yes, sah. Beg pahdan, sah; but thaih was a land, sah—some land, sah. I can't rightly say, sah, but just when the sun he da go set I think I see a land thaih to leewud? Yes, sah?"

From his seat on the wheel-box Johnson gave him the grudging and watchful assent of a nod. He had seen the land himself, a tiny pyramid of rose glimpsed for a moment on the western sky-

line, their first landfall among the islands. And since then he had been waiting to hear of it, preparing himself for the inevitable, recurrent question.

The brown boy returned to the shy attack:

"I can't rightly say, sah, but that land thaih he da go look very much like Morne Agarou, sah. Very much like St. Vincent, sah. Yes, sah?"

And again, evading his eyes by staring hard at the deck, Johnson gave him the constrained assent of a nod. When he looked up he saw that Siza, the Barbadian, had come noiselessly to stand behind his mate. The black had more dignity and self-assurance by half than the mixed-blood; he had gone to the board-schools in Bridgetown and his English was excellent, with a strong flavor of Piccadilly.

"We would be obliged, sir," he said, speaking quietly over John Bull's shoulder, "to know where we are bound, sir."

"Bound, eh?" Johnson regarded them angrily. "Bound, eh?" He got to his feet. "By heavens!" he muttered, "If you *will* have it out of me, why ——" And then, for perhaps the tenth time in the course of the voyage, the determination went out of him, and, lifting an arm, he waved it savagely toward the bows. "To the north'ard! We're bound to the north'ard, I tell you! Now look here, the two of you. I don't want you loafing around. Do something! Take a lick at the pump. The pump. D'you hear?"

He turned his back on them.

"They're like children," he told himself. The thought gave him no comfort.

Letting himself down on the wheel-box once more, he fell into prolonged sardonic reverie.

"What a damned fool I am!" he muttered from time to time.

At rest so, he looked worn and emaciated. His face was bloodless under its tan, lending the skin a yellow cast. A three days' growth of beard deepened the hollows under his cheek bones. The fever, not wholly gone out, had returned a little during the voyage, giving to his mind at times a queer slant of flightiness, and this reverie, into which he had fallen on each succeeding night, followed on each succeeding night the same unvarying course to the same invariable end.

The darkness deepened. The schooner's wake became visible, stretching away, glimmering, corruscating, a dozen cable lengths to the south. From the waist came in monotonous pulsations the clank and sough of the bilge pump, and the muffled, melancholy chanty that went with the work.

"What a damned fool I am!" Johnson repeated from time to time, nodding his head in the same self-pitying, sardonic abstraction.

He got up and, leaving the wheel, went forward. At the break he paused to tell Siza to take the helm, and then he continued on his way, past the foremast and the capstan, picking his path over lines and gear till he came where he could lean with one arm on the rail and the other over the smooth barrel of the bowsprit. There,

with his eyes brooding into the empty darkness ahead and his ears filled with the soft thunder of the cutwater beneath, he fell into the second phase of his reverie.

"What a damned fool I am!"

They were the same words as before, but between the sense of them now and the sense before there lay a distance not to be measured by the mere ship's length his body had traversed. Whereas, before, he had spoken in ironical self-mockery, as much as to say, "What a fool I am *to come!*" now in his tone there was nothing but the bitterest of self-abasement, self-reproach: "What a fool I am *not to have come before!* To have let myself be hoaxed and bullied and turned back by—well, by nothing at all!"

It was as if he said all that. . . .

And into his mind there came a small bright picture. He saw a room bathed in a frank, incandescent glare. He saw it vividly, in detail—the maroon-and-silver wall paper, the gilded steam radiator, the let-in sideboard, the photograph of his senior crew framed above the gas grate. He saw the table laid for dinner, the white cloth, the broken bread, the spot where last Sunday's gravy had spilled, the untidy pile of shameful letters. He saw her facing him across the table. She was standing, just as he was standing, leaning forward with her hands on the table as he was leaning, her cheeks flushed, her eyes defiant, as were his. And in that heavy brightness, as in an intolerable vacuum, he heard his

own voice crying, faintly: "And then, when you've come to the end of your rope, I know how it will be; well enough I know. You'll come crawling back to me, Minna, and I'll be good to you—yes—damn my soul to hell for a poor, soft fool!—I'll have to be good to you!"

He stirred and passed his bare forearm over his eyes. And then he seemed to hear another voice, her voice this time: "That's very fine, very fine. And yet who knows if it won't be *I* that will have to be good to *you*. There may be an end to *your* rope, too. Stranger things have happened."

Yes, far stranger things indeed had happened.

Again he stirred, and again he passed his forearm over his eyes. And immediately, without apparent transition, he was in the third phase of his reverie. Leaving the bow, he began to pace the deck, all the way aft and forward again, his hands locked behind him, his head thrown back, his eyes fixed in the towering, dim cloud of the schooner's rigging.

"To-morrow!" he said to himself, aloud. "By this time to-morrow we shall see!"

In the sunlight each day he had been able to keep it out of sight in the background of his mind. But as night drew on, as the brightness and all the visible amplitude of sky and sea went out, casting him back inexorably upon the companionship of the vessel, under the thrall, as it were, of this mistress and sharer of his exile; then, pacing back and forth, back and forth in

the starlight, he began to feel the weight of the oncoming event, the inevitable, oncoming moment of struggle, of anger, perhaps, and violence, when one of their two wills, his or the ship's, must be definitely and forever broken.

As the day of the voyage might be, he had said to himself: "Three days! By this time, three days!" or, "The day after to-morrow!"

Now it was "to-morrow"!

Leaning in the bows, he had had a vision of a woman. Now he had another vision, of another woman. He saw the ship as another woman, a woman with pale, long-curving, diaphanous flesh, a woman too wise to be any longer young or any longer profligate, a woman in the last full flower of desire, spending her loveliness now with a fierce singleness of eve, a late, twilight chastity, an extortionate faithfulness to the one love, the love that must not be let go, since it could not be other than the last.

"La Guiablesse!" It was almost as if he heard the whisper of the golden boy wandering the star-filled spaces of the rigging. *La Guiablesse! Ah oui, La Guiablesse!"*

For the moment he felt the utter hopelessness of struggling against that. . . .

He had slept poorly each night. To-night he did not sleep at all. A dozen times he was out of his sleeping box for a restless circuit of the decks. At three o'clock, driven by some obscure gnawing of apprehension, he relieved the brown boy at the helm.

In reality there was no need of any one at all at that helm. The voyage had been remarkable, almost too remarkable. Not once since leaving the Guiana coast had the trade wind veered or fallen; a steady topsail breeze against which, on the one long reach, the vessel stayed herself impeccably from one day's end to another, helm one point aweather and headsails hauled. It had been remarkable. The day's runs had been big —almost too big.

Johnson took the wheel "for a couple of hours." He had held it for fifteen of them before he was through. Sitting there on the box, his weight eased against the metal rim, he saw the dawn, like a vast, silent explosion, half-hidden by the blue wall of Martinique and the shoulders of Pelée.

The French island went away slowly, withdrawing its velvet headlands little by little and folding up its purple valleys till it became a cloud, and then no more than the shadow of a cloud hanging for a moment on the skyline far astern.

On the horizon beyond the bows there lay the shadow of another cloud. John Bull, going into the forward works, studied it for a long while from beneath his shading palm. Then he came aft. He said nothing. But in the flat white tide of the sunlight Johnson felt him standing there at the corner of the house, waiting. He aroused himself.

"Get Siza out," he said.

When the Barbadian had come abovedecks,

blinking with sleep, Johnson had the two of them stand before him. With their eyes on the blazing deck they heard what he had to say. He spoke in a low tone, without especial emphasis.

"And now we'll have no monkey business," he concluded. "No more of this heathen rubbish, you understand. You at least, Siza, ought to know better. All that has happened has just happened to happen. You'll see. It will be perfectly simple, perfectly easy. All I want you to remember is that I'm master of this vessel—and that I won't stand any monkey business; not for a minute. Now go. Both of you can turn in if you want to."

It was evident that they did not want to. They went off forward, out of sight beyond the house. If they conversed, it must have been in whispers, for Johnson heard nothing more of them.

Noon came. The slow, hot, early hours of afternoon began to tick away on the ship's clock under the companionway hatch. And then, as slowly, the later hours. . . .

At half past five, feeling a slight lurch of the deck beneath him, Johnson lifted his head. Although he had been under its lee for an hour, to the casual glance it might have seemed that he was now, for the first time, conscious of the island's proximity—as if, had it not been for that sudden, soft flaw in the wind under the shelter of towering Diablotin, he might have passed it by and gone on sailing to the northward unawares.

He had not been there for upward of fifteen

months. Unconsciously he brushed a hand over his eyes. As it were but a long stone's throw across the gently stirring water, he saw the curve of the white beach, the even feathering of palms, the yellow stucco of the customhouse; beyond them the town itself half-buried in the immense inundation of its greenery; behind and above all, the majestic presence of the mountain, hiding its head in a cloud that sent gray tentacles of mist and sudden wind feeling down its deep, jungled ravines.

"Well," he said to himself. It was only a whisper. He found that his lips were dry, and wet them with his tongue. "Well, here we are," he said. "That's simple enough."

He felt tired. An extraordinary sensation of inertia came over him and of a sudden it seemed that the simple act of bringing the schooner about on the other tack to come up into the roadstead was too much to think of. It became better just to sit there, saying to himself, "Well, here we are, here we are."

He had to take hold of himself, for already they were beginning to draw past. He got to his feet with an effort, and calling, "John! Siza!" whirled the spokes.

"Hard-a-lee!" he shouted. "Stand by! Stand by!" His voice sounded high and tenuous in his own ears. Perhaps it was the fault of his ears. "To much quinine," he muttered. He was conscious of Siza and the brown boy staring at him across the roof of the house, just their heads showing, sullen, inert.

"To the devil with them!" he muttered.

She came up to the wind, swinging slowly and more slowly to starboard; or rather, it seemed that while she remained stationary, the visible world—the island, the mountain, and the cloud—swept slowly and more slowly to port. He heard the first flutter as the throat of the mainsail lost the wind, and then the foresail slatting and banging, slatting and banging. It kept on slatting and banging too long. And then he saw that the visible world had ceased revolving.

He understood, and a groan came out of his throat. He was caught there "in irons." She hung there in the eye of the wind, stock still, looking at the shore. And now that she had lost her momentum nothing he could do, nothing in the world, indeed, but some chance flaw of cross-wind, would bring her over on the other tack.

"She's too light," he groaned. "Too high, I tell you! Too high in the water! Give me a flaw!" he cried.

A flaw came, but it was on the wrong hand. The vessel fell away, slowly, less slowly, on the old tack; slowly and then less slowly the island, the mountain, and the cloud swept back again. Another flaw, stronger yet and chill with a breath of mountain rain, bellied the canvas. White crept into the wake. And as if she had given enough of her precious time in that passing gesture, that brief and scornful obeisance to the land, the schooner stood on swiftly again toward the loom of Gaudeloupe and the islands to the north.

"Too light!" he kept repeating to himself in a thick whisper, as it were in absence of mind. "Too high in the water! Too much freeboard!"

His hands lay idle on the wheel. Somewhere in the back of his brain the thought kept drumming: "Look here, if you're to try again you've got to be quick about it! Look here, if you're to try again. . . ."

But all he could seem to think of was that monotonous reiteration:

"Too light! Too high! I might have known."

His heavy eyes left the shore and went up to the soaring fabric of the ship. The moment of evening had come again; the sun, distorted and sultry, hung a handbreadth over the sea, and in its level rays the canvas burned with a lambent flame, like the flush of a woman transfigured by a swift and painless triumph.

Johnson's face grew red, too, redder than the sun. His eyes narrowed, and into them came a new kind of a light. His teeth chattered and he began to shiver.

"You will? You will, eh?"

Behind him the mountain had been swallowed quite suddenly by the cloud. Broad, dark-blue arrows ran here and there over the water. Squalls make quickly in the lee sides of these high islands, quickly and without warning. The broad arrows collided; lost themselves in a broader, darker sheet. But Johnson did not see.

The shivering fit passed.

"You will, eh?" His lips drew back against

his teeth. "We'll see. If you won't go one way, then you'll go the other. If you won't tack, by God! you'll *wear!*"

His voice rose of a sudden, powerful strident:

"Hard aweather! Stand by to luff! *Main-sheet!*"

What happened in the moment while the vessel's head was swinging away from the wind will always remain fragmentary and confused in the telling. For one thing, you know, Johnson was not quite himself. And for another, his eyes were half blinded by the reclining disk of the sun.

At least this time the negroes were on the move. He seemed to see John Bull making terrified gestures astern, and to hear his voice, thin and high: "Don't do it, sah! Fo' dearie God, sah!" And then there was Siza. Siza had to be dealt with. The large, glossy creature was laying hands on the wheel; actually striving, with the silent arrogance of panic, to tear his, Johnson's away.

Johnson struck him, driving his knuckles with all his strength into the black meat of the negro's face. He saw him falling away in a slow, sick arc. And after that he saw no more. A sudden shadow engulfed the ship. For an instant she stood perfectly upright, breathless; then, as if under the blow of another hand, she jibed over on the striking squall.

Johnson felt the mainboom cutting the air over his bent head, and, as if in the same in-

stant with it, the splintering crash of the thing fetching up on the sheet. He felt the deck turning over. He felt himself carried clumsily through the opaque air. And that was the last he felt.

Johnson was insensible for eight minutes and some seconds. The ship's clock had been striking four bells—that is to say, six o'clock—at the moment when he had put the helm aweather. And when he opened his eyes again it was precisely nine minutes after the hour. It is strange that he should remember it so definitely. Perhaps not so strange, though; for lying on his shoulder in the break of the companionway, against the side of which his flying head had struck, his first conscious sight was of the chronometer's face staring down at him, its broad brass hands pointing to nine minutes after the hour of six.

There was a welter of rain in the wind. It made a thunder along the decks. Johnson sat up. So he found himself face to face with Siza, who was also sitting up. For a moment they stared at each other.

"Where are we?" Johnson asked.

The Barbadian shook his mauled head.

"What beats me," Johnson resumed, in a dull, querulous fashion—"what beats me is why we didn't go right on over, bottom up."

Siza nodded aloft. "Mainsail went instead, sir."

Craning up, Johnson saw the boom stripped

naked, sagging at the end of the topping-lift. That seemed to bring him around. He jumped up, brushed the water from his eyes, and, turning forward, took stock of the schooner's condition. She had been pretty well swept clean. The mainsail, the tops, and all the headsails were gone, blown tidily out of their ring-bolts. Only the foresail remained. And after he had looked at the foresail for a moment or so he wiped his eyes again.

"Good Lord alive!" he said to himself. He turned to glance over the stern. As far as he could see under the blanket of the squall, the schooner's wake made off, boiling and white. Yes, they were making way. There could be no doubt of it, they were making way, considerable way, and on the right tack, what was more. In the streaming wind, with only one sail left and the helm holding her up, she stayed herself with a kind of drunken rectitude and swept forward swiftly and blindly on the landward course—*his* course.

The pain in his head became nothing. He felt himself of a sudden heroic, puissant, indomitable. He sprang here and there; shouting strong commands.

"Siza! On your feet! Get forward with the lead, my boy. The lead! Look alive, or we'll run the island down. . . . Where's John Bull? John Bull! Ai! There! Look up, boy; it's all over! Get out of this! Confound your hide! Get out of this and tumble forward there. Stand

by to lower away on the foresail when Siza sings! . . . Siza, look here! When you have four fathom, sing out, and sing out loud! . . ."

So his voice continued to ring along the decks above the tumult of the wind and rain, questioning, commanding.

"Five fathom, Siza? Keep an eye! Four fathom? All right, my boy! Lay aft at the double now and give John a hand with the fore. Let her run! Let her run! . . . Now clear that starboard anchor, quick! Plenty of chain, plenty of chain. . . ."

So it rang over the decks while the cloud tumbled to pieces and the wind went out. These lee-side squalls are gone as abruptly as they come. One moment there was a black veil, a voice half drowned by falling water, the long-drawn rumble of chain paid through an iron hawse-hole. . . . And, as if it were the moment following, a crystal clarity poured through the sky, and in the long afterglow of day the cocopalms on the beach looked out to find a shape at rest upon the waters of the roadstead three cables off the beach, the loom of an island trading schooner half naked and half wrecked and somehow vaguely familiar.

Johnson, looking back at her from the custom-house landing over the bare shoulders of his oarsmen, felt for a moment a pang of pity. He had a vision of the warm yellow years that were done and of the strange, deep bond in exile that was broken. Just for a moment as he gazed

back at her across the darkening mirror of the water, her will subdued, her passionate spirit conquered, her body stripped of its old extortionate loveliness, he felt the tragedy and the pathos of the thing.

He shook himself uneasily. "But, all the same," he muttered, "it had to be."

And, turning his back on her, he walked through the shadowed arch that cut the custom-house in half.

"Minna!" He lifted his arms impulsively in the gloom. "Minna! Oh, my Minna, my Minna!"

Yes, stranger things indeed had happened. It did not sound, somehow, as if he had come "to be good to her."

In the squalid darkness of the street beyond he caught a black boy by the shirt.

"Where is the lady? You know, the American lady from New York who has been here for a year perhaps? The lady called Mrs. Johnson? . . . What? At the Callend's place under the Morne Bruce? You're sure of that? Well, son, here's a black penny for you. I know the way."

The boy stared after him as with long, swift strides he vanished among the little houses of mud and thatch. Others, too, as he passed their dimly lighted doorways, stared after him. He had meant to shave, but he had forgotten it. He had meant to shift to his shore things, but he had forgotten that, too. He had no hat on,

his feet were bare, and his thin, drenched shirt lay open at the breast. And the blood from his scalp wound, mixed with water and dried, spread a pinkish blur over one side of his fever-wasted face.

Nothing of this occurred to him until, done with the crowded darkness of the town, he found himself on a hillside, climbing a gravel roadway between thick, heavy-scented banks of foliage. An oppressive silence lay here, ruffled only by the infinitesimal whine of mosquitoes and the rare flicker of bats.

"I wonder," he said, and his pace grew a hint less headlong. His hands, groping blindly, touched his damp garments here and there, his stubbled, sunken cheeks, his unkempt hair.

"I wonder, Minna ——" And then it came out, what he had studied so long to keep hidden away in the darkness of his heart. "I wonder—if you—what you will think—of *me*."

He had come to a wider place overtopping a thick-grown cliff. In the warm night he felt cold. He saw the house across the graveled dooryard. On the second floor there was a long, dark gallery with blinds, on the ground floor nothing but a wall of stucco, all blank save for a door in the center buried under a deep arch of twining bougainvillæa. The door was open. In the doorway, shadowed against a dim interior glow of candles, he saw a figure waiting.

Johnson walked forward slowly, as if his feet had become lead. All the while he said to himself: "It can't be you! It can't be you!"

His hands were held out the least way in front of him, their palms upward. And he said, "No, no, it can't be Minna."

The figure left the shadow under the vine and came to meet him, moving slowly, too. And then in the faint sheen of the moonlight he saw that it was the figure of an island priest!

He stopped, with a sudden sense of suffocation.

"But—but I have *come!*"

The priest, startled and mystified by this extraordinary outburst, regarded him in silence.

"But she is here!" Johnson protested, huskily. "I—I am *he!* I am the man! I am Johnson—Albert M. Johnson! Don't you understand? I was—I am—her husband!"

The priest, moved perhaps by habit, or perhaps altogether by compassion, bowed his head.

"My son," he murmured, "she waited a long while."

Turning on his heel, he moved back slowly into the house. Johnson followed him. He saw her lying on the bed under the light of two tall candles. By the look on her dead face he saw that the priest had spoken the truth, perhaps more of the truth than he knew. For she had waited a very long while indeed.

The man lifted his face from the coverlet of the bed where for a time it had lain hidden and motionless. There had been no sound in the room save the ticking of a nickel clock on an ant-bitten shelf in the farther corner; Johnson had

thought that the priest was gone. When he saw the dark-robed figure standing at the bed's foot the muscles of his gaunt face moved with a scarcely perceptible spasm.

"What time was it, Father?"

"What time?"

"When she—went. When she died."

"I have said, my son, but just now. Had you been but a little sooner ——"

"Yes, yes, Father; but what hour? What minute of the hour?'

"Ah, but my son!" The priest lifted his hands in a gesture of deprecation. "As to the hour and minute ——"

"Never mind," said Johnson.

He got to his feet and, without looking again at the priest or at the figure of the woman lying on the bed, he passed out of the door. Crossing the level bit, he came to the edge of the jungled declivity. With his hands locked behind him he stood there gazing out across the dark huddle of the town to where, shadowed forth with the faintest silver penciling of the sickle moon, the schooner lay at rest upon the water. And as he remembered the moment of pity he had felt for her his face grew paler yet and his teeth nipped tighter into the flesh of his lip. For now across the dim-lit space between them he seemed to catch the gesture of her quiescence, the sense of her mute and tranquil mockery.

"I might have known," he said, in a whisper,

"when she didn't fight. And I can see now that she didn't fight; she came."

"Yes," he repeated, after another moment, "she came of her own will. She had me down. And then something happened, and she came.

He turned at sound of a gentle cough behind him.

"Were you still curious as to the time, my son?" The priest studied him thoughtfully. "For if you are, the maid who was with her has just now come in."

"Thank you, Father, but you needn't trouble." Johnson turned back to the cliff again. "For I know now," he said. "Minna died just after six—sometime between six and nine minutes after six o'clock this evening."

"Ah!" murmured the priest. "Yes, so I was told. . . ."

I am aware that it would make a better story if I could tell how Johnson took vengeance on his ship that night; how he rowed out to her alone, opened a seam with his own hands, and sent her reeling and bubbling down under the black waters of the roadstead. Or how, with a finer irony of imagination, he slipped her cable and let the wind take her out and away into the immeasurably empty spaces of ocean, to wait, as the other had waited, till a lonely derelict went down.

But the truth of the thing is that I have seen them both within a year. As I was coming into the bay at Barbadoes she was making out, full

before the wind. And as she passed under our counter I saw him leaning on the wheel, gazing up at us (apparently) as he always had, with at least a ghost of that same old somnolent expression of disdain.

I don't know how it really was, but outwardly there seemed little change in either of them. Neither of them seemed much older. In the sanguine air of dawn I had the bizarre thought that they had somehow found their way to the far land and drunk of the waters of eternal youth. I don't know. Only one real change was apparent. As she passed close by I saw that the name under her taffrail had been changed. It caught the sun and glittered when she careened to our bow wave:

La Guiablesse,

BOTH JUDGE AND JURY

THE moon was rising. Already it touched with silver the head of the dead volcano which held the island up out of the deep Caribbean waters; it flooded a high ravine here, or there on a far ridge a cornice of mahoganies thrashing in the trade wind. As yet, on the lee shore, beyond the faint glow from the portico of Government House, the mystery of starlight held on. The two men were hardly more than two shirt-fronts and the tips of two cigars.

'You've not been in the tropics before?" murmured the governor.

"No," said Loomis.

"Ah? It's rather extraordinary just at first, I fancy."

"Very."

They were silent again. The straggling town was already dark, the black people asleep between their mud and iron walls, the dogs snatching a wink before the moon came; nothing was to be heard save the ripple of the tide or the rare cry of a sea bird.

"You will be here for—for—ah—some time?"

"About a week, I should say, sir."

"Really? I wasn't aware we should look for a steamer so soon."

"The *Paramaribo* is to pick me up, I believe, direct for Halifax."

"Really?"

They had both stopped. Involuntarily they had drawn a little apart, and now they were facing each other, watching each other.

"Yes," Loomis went on, speaking slowly. "It's a bit out of the *Paramaribo's* way, but it's by government orders."

"The government of the Dominion of Canada?"

"Quite so." Loomis threw his cigar away with a kind of jerk and squared his shoulders. "I'll tell you, sir. Frankly, I've come here to take away a man. The man I've come to get, sir, is ——"

"Is Jim White?"

Loomis paused for the fraction of a second before replying.

"The man *known* as Jim White. That is to say, Hyatt Carnes."

"I see! I see!" The governor turned a crab on its back with his boot toe. "There was another of your kind, some time ago."

"There was. Inspector Alward. He came out here in August. He did not return, as you are also aware. He was murdered here, whether by governmental collusion or not remains (I will continue to be quite frank with you, sir) an open question."

"It need not. I tell you the truth when I say that neither White nor I knew the fellow's name

or errand. Had he been frank with me there would have been a different outcome. He thought best, instead, to be frank with the blacks. A mulatto by the name of Kragie did him in. Kragie was tried for murder, convicted, sentenced, *and hanged.*"

The moon had topped the mountain. Loomis's lids drooped slightly as he watched the other's face, bare in the white inundation.

"You believe, then, in the law?"

"I do—and I don't. I believe in the laws *I* make, simply because I know they are just laws."

He said it without bombast. Like Loomis, he was a self-made man, and, like Loomis, he did not presume upon the fact.

"By the way," he added, "you've a warrant, of course?"

"I have, sir—a warrant thirteen years old. Would you care to ——"

"No, no. I take your word, as I ask you to take mine. But one thing. Why if Doctor Carnes was wanted—that is —— Well, what put you on the track at last of the man here?"

"Just a scrap of letter, sir, smuggled through to Doctor Carnes's sister in Vancouver. 'Address me Jim White, St. Katherine, B. W. I.'—that's all. Inspector Alward came out, and, as you know ——"

"Yes, yes, quite so. Hmmm! Quite so."

"And now, *I* ——"

"Quite so!"

The conversation had arrived at an *impasse.*

Loomis lit a fresh cigar. They moved on again along the beach, away from the town, slowly. The peculiar, full-bodied beauty of night and the ocean tropics lay about them, but if they took note of it, it was only with their nerves. Perhaps for this very reason the drain on the northerner's nervous fabric was deeper than he suspected; at any rate, he began to have a feeling he had never had before, a kind of a sense of impotence. He was a man to whom obstacles had always been essentially obstacles, nothing more. Of a sudden he halted and faced around.

"Your Excellency," he said, "I can't help feeling that you are determined to put things in my way."

"No." The other appeared to weigh his words. "I shall put nothing in your way. . . . Shall we be walking back now?"

As they fell in step, the governor clasped his hands behind him and meditated on the shadow-streaked sand. He was a shorter man than Loomis, his flesh was softer and less resilient, his skin sallower, his brown eyes more deeply sunken by prolonged, half-won fights with fever. One would say he was no match for Loomis.

"You asked me," he said, "if I believed in the law. Let me ask—you've read, in your Hugo, about the chap called Jean Valjean?"

Loomis shook himself slightly, almost with a suggestion of anger.

"I am neither judge nor jury, sir."

"I see, I see." The other's tone grew even

more abstracted. "I used to know Carnes in Canada. I knew his weaknesses and his strength. If it had been one of his weaknesses that led him to shoot Edward Blaine-Smith, I shouldn't have hesitated to give him up to the first constable in sight; you may take my word for that. As it was ——"

"Oh, come, sir. Blaine-Smith was shot down in cold blood."

"Granted. But he had called Carnes's best friend a name—had called him more particularly 'a thief and a bastard.' The 'thief' we'll pass over. Neither is it a life-and-death affair to call a man the other thing—unless, mark me, *he happens to be one!* And this friend of Carnes's *happened to be one!* Now you will understand ——"

"I tell you, sir, I'm neither judge nor jury. I must protest."

The governor's shoulders grew heavier.

"I suppose a judge would say the world didn't need a man who would shoot another man on such provocation. I'll tell you something, Mr. Loomis. There was an island in the world that needed such a man. When Doctor Carnes came here there were perhaps two hundred people, and their lives weren't worth the bother of living. Doctor Carnes knew nothing of tropical diseases. Within two years he knew more about mountain fever (as we call it) than any other man in the Lesser Antilles. I repeat, sir, thirteen years ago this island was a pest spot. It was scarcely on the map. A mulatto tax-collector

came over twice a year from St. Lucia; that was about all. Now there are upward of nine thousand souls, four parishes, a Government House, and—a governor."

The speaker bowed his head slightly at the last.

"Perhaps you will wonder, sir, how I, a comparatively poor man from another dominion, a nobody, a friend of the like of Jim White—how *I* —— But I'll tell you. They tried one of their easy governors at first—one of their professional younger sons. It didn't do."

He stopped walking and touched the inspector's sleeve.

"Look about you! I am governor, but this is the work of Hyatt Carnes."

The moon rode higher. In the vast white illumination the sea recovered the memory of the colors of day—phantom purples, ghostly turquoise. The shadows of palm boles lay across the beach like a tiger's skin; between the trees clusters of pale, heavy-lipped flowers stirred in the slow wind.

"It *is* beautiful," Loomis breathed, as if against his will.

The governor took in his look of admiration, half nerves, half awe.

"But not that!" he cried. "Beauty, yes! But one grows tired of beauty; sometimes one has a fearful thirst almost for ugliness—for something cold and hard-won and tawdry. No, this is what I mean; this town. This whole island, sir; the villages, the parish schools, the little es-

tates of sugar and cocoa and limes. Seventeen thousand pounds sterling in exports per annum, sir! Seventeen thousand pounds!"

He stood so for a moment with his hands lifted.

"And *that,* sir, is what your *murderer* has done!"

"But I say!" Loomis shifted uneasily. "Hang take it, sir! I'm *not* the judge.. I'm a machine! I'm set to do a task. I do it."

On the gravel before the house a small Welsh mare stood mourning over her own shadow, her legs propped apart, her head drooping. The governor wheeled to face his companion.

"Mr. Loomis, I am going to put nothing between you and Jim White. In return I ask a favor. This: Until you have definitely to act, will you be so good as to say nothing of your errand; will you study this man *as* a man; and then—well, will you talk with me again?"

It was a moment before Loomis spoke. Under his drooping lids his eyes studied the other's face with something between mystification and easy wonder. In the end he murmured:

"Very well, sir."

"Done, then! . . . Shall we go in?"

At the door the governor's wife was awaiting them. She was a vaguely pretty, angular woman with dry hair and sallow skin, a typical Colonial. Her large blue eyes sought her husband's.

"Tom, Jim White is here." And she laid a hand on his sleeve with a gesture which seemed to say, "Don't, Tom!"

Jim White was seated at a long, bare mahogany table, under the light of a candelabrum. Before him was a glass, a decanter of St. Croix rum, several lime peels, and an empty soda bottle. . . . Here was a man with whom low latitudes and exile had not dealt kindly. One could see by the dry luster of the eyes and the color of the skin stretched over the skull structure that long coping with fevers had not been without its price; more than by anything else his physical and mental ebb told in his nerves, his thin, arid, uncontrollable outbursts of temper.

He got to his feet unsteadily at sight of the governor in the door. He pounded on the table with his open palms.

"Yes, I'm here! Look at me all you want!"

His voice was shrill with defiance. He pounded harder.

"No, by God! Tom, I won't be scolded tonight. The mist settled in Two Roads three nights ago. The fever struck before morning. The valley's astink with it. And I've come out. Here you see me, sitting in a clean room, drinking cold rum and soda, having a fine time."

The governor had not moved from the doorway. He spoke slowly.

"I suppose, then, that Jenks and Slowboy must be down with it, else, of course, you would have sent one of them out instead."

"Talk! Talk like a curate all you damn well please!"

The fellow's ecstasy was shocking. He showed

his teeth. He pounded harder on the table. He danced on his toes. "Talk, talk, talk!"

The governor approached the table. His voice was quiet, austere:

"Now, sir, have the goodness to tell me what you're grousing about."

"I? Oh! Ha-ha! Why should I grouse? Isn't everything just too splendid in there? Only seventeen down, and as for ice, you know ——"

"So! That's better!" The governor took up a pad. "Ice, eh!"

"Icebags, douches, quinine. But why should one grouse about *quinine?*"

"Icebags," the governor wrote, "douches, quinine ——"

"Brooms, mops, formaldehyde ——"

The governor looked up from his list. "Quite right. And now, Jim, go to bed. . . . Pollett! I say, Pollett, show Mr. White up to the west chamber. . . . Where's Gabriel? Ah, Gabriel, here, this list. Look alive, will you! Make up a good stock, pack a camp, turn out Potter Snaith, Washington, and Coco. Tell Fox I shall want horses in front within the hour. . . . Pollett, you've not shown Mr. White up yet. . . . Jim, go! . . . Mr. Loomis—I'm afraid—for a few days—White, as you see, is quite done, and I shall have to go in and do the best I can, myself. For a few days, then, if you'll have the goodness to forgive my absence ——"

"For a few days," Loomis broke in upon the apologies, "I don't fancy I shall get much of

White, either. So, if you don't mind, I think I'd rather go along. Shouldn't mind seeing the country."

The governor bent his head to one side and studied him.

"As you please," he said. "And about White, you're quite right. I fancy you *wouldn't* see much of the impossible fellow *here*."

Loomis did not take the full significance of this till, about an hour later, the moonlit cavalcade came up into the shadow of the island jungle. And there, like a schoolboy not to be left behind, Jim White awaited them, leaning on the neck of his prop-legged pony. Nothing was said on either side as he joined. He fell in at the rear. He remained silent. He seemed chastened, listless, burned out. . . .

To the northerner that night ride over the tangled buttresses of the Morne was something not to be forgotten. The damp heat hanging under the leaves lay heavy in his lungs. The effect, paradoxically, was a sharpening of all the faculties. A million infinitesimal stirrings, cries, snappings, ululations, came to his ears through the forest walls; even in the pauses in travel there was no silence. His eyes glimpsed a multitude of things like serpents in the spotted light —creepers and lianas looping tree to tree. Or at long intervals the jungle sank away, giving up vast little savannas rolling down blue in the moon to hide away in mist-pools. Once there was a sight of the mountain and a ravine, and white mist

flowing down the ravine, to fill the lower levels, where it lay like the beaten white of an egg.

"That, sir," the governor pointed out, "*that's* the rotten stuff!"

"God's curse and the devil's curse, too, be on it!"

White had come up from the rear; the malediction was his. A curious change had come over him. It was as if his fragile anger had returned, and yet it hadn't the quality of anger. The man looked rapt. An unhealthy eagerness drew him forward.

"See there!" His heels beat weakly at the pony's belly. "That's Two Roads just there, buried deep. God's damnation on it! choking the beggars in their beds. Tom, I say, are we all lame? Why do we want to be all night about it?"

It had been pretty near that, in truth; the moon was low, and although there was no light in the east, yet there was the feeling of pause in the air which comes before the sudden tropic dawn.

White's heels kicked with an increased, spasmodic violence; a wave of color ran hot over his cheeks; his eyes grew larger.

"Come, Tom! Damn it! Spur up. We must get down to them!"

"Take care, Jim!" The governor turned in his saddle.

"Care? Hell! I'm going. I tell you Tom, I ——"

The governor, leaning over quickly, caught the

limp form and dragged it to him from the shying pony.

"Boys," he called back, "break out the camp under the road here. Get the wall tent up straight away! Mr. White is ill."

Watching him as he got down with his sagging burden, Loomis saw on the governor's face a look of bewilderment, horror, and grief.

The tent was pitched. Dawn broke over the mountain, a white devastation. Loomis, uncertain precisely what to do with himself, heard the thin dribble of the sick man's delirium creeping out beneath the tent-flaps. After a moment the governor himself emerged. In the midst of the ordered confusion—negroes panting under tent-rolls and cases, animals backing and snorting—there was something in the look of the short, green-faced, white-clad figure which seemed to say that he, too, for the moment, was uncertain precisely what to do with himself. He looked at the sky, the immeasurably empty dome of blue. He stared down the gently sloping savanna at the mist that had swallowed the village. The attention of his ears seemed to go back to the low-walled tent and the frail bumble of words without meaning. He wheeled and saw above him Loomis. . . . He came at something like a rush. Loomis had the strong but indefinable sense that he was being charged upon. And then the man seemed to have lost hold of what he had been going to say. An awkward silence fell between them.

"He is—very bad?" Loomis inquired at last.

"He will die."

The complete, dry acceptance in the tone was shocking. For perhaps the first time in his life Loomis found himself stammering.

"But—but see here, sir—I—— If there is anything at all I can do. I'm not much as a nurse, but if you care to have me look out for White, while you're down below ——"

"No! Thanks!" The governor lifted both arms in a disordered gesture. "See here, my dear chap, you must get out. The road we came by has no branches; in daylight you should not miss your way; you should be at Government House by early afternoon. I will be there in a few days—four at most. Till then ——"

Loomis, weighing the change which had come over the dignified, almost phlegmatic executive, did not move.

"I prefer to stay," he said, quietly.

"And *I*"—the governor grasped the horse's bridle—"I—I won't hear of it. There's danger here. I tell you, Loomis, I'll not have another agent's disappearance laid at my door, or at Jim White's. If it weren't for that you might jolly well ——"

"But it isn't 'for that.'" Loomis spoke slowly, watching the other's eyes. "For there's no danger here above the mist. As you told me yourself, so long as one keeps clear of that ——"

He dropped it, at sight of the other's face. One could see the man was not himself; that his

reserve was shattered, and that he was ashamed of himself and of what he was doing—a man forced to quibble in the presence of tragedy. Gratuitously, and of a sudden, Loomis retreated from his position.

"Well, Your Excellency, have it as you wish."

Lifting the reins, he turned the animal back into the trail. Within the minute he was swallowed by the green flood of the jungle.

That a man like Loomis should have surrendered his position so quietly should have been matter for suspicion. The fact was that he had not; he had simply avoided what is known in domestic affairs as a "scene." After a hundred yards he pulled up. He found a place where the leaf screen thinned on the shoreward side, and there, sitting motionless, he watched. He saw the camp completed. Under the waxing glare of forenoon he saw the blacks starting down the savanna, the pack mules led. He saw the governor following, lagging, stopping once or twice as he went, and once again for a longer moment at the very margin of the mist pool, to gaze back at the tent left behind, a tiny snow-spot on the verdant upsweep of the mountain. And then he, too, turning for the last time, followed the men and mules with a kind of leap into the glimmering smother below. . . .

Loomis lifted the reins and guided the pony back to the open. In the sight of the mulatto, Snaith, who had been left with the dying man, he took off saddle and bridle, wove a deft hob-

ble of rope, and turned the animal adrift. Stooping, he entered the tent.

He saw the sick man lying on a canvas cot in the close yellow glare. Already he would scarcely have known him. The sallow skin of his face had turned a bluish-gray, blotched with bright crimson. His breathing was unrhythmical, stertorous, and difficult. His burning eyes, fastened upon the intruder, did not seem for a while to take him in.

Loomis made quick gestures with his arms. He drew nearer and retreated again, as if trying by motion or distance to bring himself within the focus of that sightless sight. In the end he succeeded.

"Who are you?" White demanded in a weak, thick voice.

"I am a man from Canada."

With an astonishing return of strength White lifted on an elbow.

"What are you doing here? What do you want?"

"Nothing. I'm going to look out for you."

"Go away!"

The odd and horrible mask was contorted with a scowl; the man's body sank back again; he rolled over, gasping, and turned his face to the canvas wall. . . . Loomis hesitated a moment; then he went out.

In the open he found himself confronted by Snaith. Snaith had overheard the governor's command; he had also caught something of what

went on in the tent. He found himself in a dilemma. The governor was his temporal god, and that his word should be treated lightly was beyond the mulatto's grasping. A truculent loyalty urged him to violence. . . . And yet the man before him, the offender, was a white man. A deep, inherited awe of all Caucasians bothered him. He was scared.

Loomis, reading this, took from an inner pocket a sheaf of official-looking papers.

"I assure you, my man, I'm quite all right here. If you care to see my credentials ——" He shuffled the papers carelessly. "No? I will tell you, then. Your governor makes laws for this island, but his laws are made for *him,* as you know, by the home government. I am from the home government." It was all a lie, but it seemed to suffice.

Bringing his saddle into the tiny triangle of shade thrown by the tent, Loomis made himself comfortable.

The sun rode high and higher. A dead heat lay on the world. Where in the dark of night there had been no silence, in the white tide of day nothing moved to mar the utter stillness. An hour passed; Loomis had rolled, lighted, and thrown away a dozen cigarettes, before the hush was broken by the mumbling resurrection of the voice within the tent.

Jim White, losing hold of his life in the humid brightness of a tropic isle, seemed to forget the brightness and the isle. He was a boy again—a

young man—full of the powers and passions, the aspirations and lusts of youth—breasting the cold clear river of his northern life. Through long spaces his words were incoherent; then for moments at a time fragments of sentences took on an incredible clarity, like the low syllables of a flute. . . . He talked with his love, by and by; his voice grew thick with a nervous tenderness.

Loomis listened without shame.

"I'm not a listener, an eavesdropper. I'm a machine."

The sun gained the zenith. The sky was blue; the sea, beyond the roll of the land, stood up blue to the horizon; and yet the northerner, staring at it steadily, understood why one after another had written it down as brass. And the mist pool in the hollow was more than ever like the beaten white of an egg.

Jim White had forgotten his love. Quite of a sudden he was fighting. There was a growl, an oath; there came an incoherent pæan of triumph; the fragile tent walls would not contain it; it rang strangely out across the rank, soft yielding body of the savannas. Words stood out clear and separate—names.

The light told on the listener. His eyes swam. The effort of keeping his attention fixed on one thing in that drooping air began to tell, too. It became an enormous effort. He was glad when the voice was done; he was worn out with intimacies; his brain rebelled.

"Good Lord alive!" he breathed. "Good Lord! No!"

For half an hour there had been silence. Loomis wondered if his man was dead. An astounding thing happened to him, and one of which he was not directly conscious. Tears welled over his lids and rolled in floods down his cheeks —tears not so much of grief as of wonder.

He experienced one of the actual frights of his life when he discovered White's head protruding between the flaps near his elbow. The man seemed to have gained flesh and color; the wasted places in his face had puffed out; his gray-blue eyes were dry and clear. He had become a quadruped, that was all—content with his hands and knees. For a moment he remained there between the flaps, staring down fixedly at the fog over Two Roads.

"The precious niggers!" he mumbled of a sudden. "Precious, filthy, sick niggers!"

His great, rosy face wagged slowly while he talked, as if with a curious exaltation of disdain.

"Why does a white man, a healthy, clean, educated white man, want to spend himself for a lot of ignorant, filthy niggers? Look at 'em!"

Loomis, who had been staring down there all day long, made the surprising discovery that black people were actually to be seen. They made no great show in that vast dome of day; they were more than anything else like a thread of flotsam cast up to await another tide on the beaches of an opaque sea; they walked and crept

tiny on the savanna, far down, with cotton bedclothing, bundles, umbrellas, some with kettles and pans, all perfectly quiet, staring back into the poisoned mist or upward at the tent and the mountain. And Loomis saw that under the drinking sun the mist itself had grown by a shade less opaque. There were phantoms in it; phantoms of huddled housetops made of grass—and the ghost of a white man in white coming painfully to the surface with a black woman on his back.

"Oh, well— Hell! Let's go!"

The sick man gave a kind of sigh as he said it. He shook himself clear of the flaps. Still on his hands and knees, as if he had got about that way all his life, he started down the slope. He went in the broad, blank sunlight to get the "niggers" and to meet his friend, an absurd quadruped, ambling down.

Loomis was on his feet. He stood very erect, with an odd sensation along his spine. He had hard work to make himself move; when he did, it was already too late. . . . White, slipping and crumpling on a more precipitous decline, had started to roll. He seemed to find rolling faster than ambling—and, besides that, he was dead.

For the first time in his life, very poignantly, Loomis felt himself, his errand, his career, his world, small enough to be in the way. He had started to run after the ambler. He stopped. He looked at the governor, toiling with an absurd and tragic haste uphill; he saw the black

men and women and children, coming like a scant swarm of flies. Turning about, he passed behind the tent. He caught up his pony, threw the saddle across its back, mounted, and rode away into the jungle track.

The light held for an hour, standing sultry in the rare openings between the tree tops. Just before sunset it turned green. Then the night came. He gave the pony its head. In the whispering dark he rode with his shoulders sinking lower and lower; only at rare intervals did he shake them into a momentary rectitude, muttering in protest:

"It's none of my affair. I'm not the judge nor the jury!"

White's body came in that night about two hours after him, laid across a pack saddle. He saw it just for a moment in the little glow beneath his window; then the somber cavalcade of two moved on again. Where the mortal exile was buried, what it said on the stone they put over him, Loomis never knew.

For seven days then he lived a vacant life; vacant and yet singularly crowded. His hands were empty, his mind horribly full. His brain hummed with thoughts like a top. Doubts would never let him be. His aimless feet carried him back and forth along the single roadway of the town, blinking idiotically at the half-clothed people, the mongrel dogs, the still more mongrel pigs asleep in the dust. The flame-banks of exotic bloom, the aspiring palms, the peacock water,

had so soon grown cheap. The immense whiteness of the sunlight drove him to shelter with a pain behind his eyes.

The governor's lady was kind—and worried. Being a British Colonial, she kept it to herself. Being a woman, she gave it away ten times within the hour. It told on the guest's nerves. Once he allowed himself the luxury of an outburst of protesting reassurance.

"But if he *weren't* quite fit, you would have *heard,* you know!"

"Oh, my word! Of course he's quite all *right!*" She cast back his own reassurance with a bright hard-lipped smile.

"It's all in not being afraid, with a thing like fever," he argued, solemnly. "So long as one's not afraid —— White was afraid, I think."

"Yes, Jim White was always afraid." Something had gone out of her voice with that. . . . "And *he,*" she cried of a sudden—"he, Tom, he *is* afraid. He'd tell you not; he'd tell me not. But I happen to have seen him in the night, after a time such as this, pacing the floor—fighting. Oh, sir, he is afraid. He knows, some day ——"

Loomis escaped the house. Once more he wandered the dreary, brilliant corridor of his prison of idleness and doubt. A wild, unspeakable idea clung in his mind:

"Perhaps—perhaps, after all—he won't come back—alive."

Loomis hated himself; he did worse, he distrusted himself. . . .

And the governor did come back. He came out of the jungle late that evening when the town was asleep, like a soldier returning unheralded and unscarred from some obscure campaign. His face was a little thinner and sallower, that was all; his eyes a little drier and brighter. He ate ravenously under the watching eyes of his wife.

There was a moment in the meal when a distinct but undefinable change came over him. He was paring a mango. He laid it down on his plate and turned his eyes to the corner where Loomis sat, half in shadow. It was as though he had forgotten somewhere in that desperate week, and but now remembered the man—with something curiously like a shock.

He took up the fruit again and finished paring it.

Neither man slept. The clock in the small, tin-roofed "Church of England" had struck the half-hour after midnight when they met, as if by some unspoken assignation, in the open air beneath the portico.

The governor was the first to speak.

"You were with him—that day?"

Loomis nodded.

"He was delirious? He—he ——" The governor turned his eyes to gaze uneasily out over the water. "He—talked?"

"He did, sir."

The governor, his eyes still averted, waited. Loomis waited. The silence grew. The inspector was the one of the two who could afford to lose

patience first. Turning away, he walked down the steps.

"But—good *God!* sir."

The muffled outcry brought him back. He came and stood before the governor. His voice was brutal with deliberation.

"Do you want to know what he said, Your Excellency? I'll tell you. He told me, in those ravings of delirium what I came all this way to learn. He gave himself away—Hyatt Carnes. He confessed to the shooting of Blaine-Smith. He lived over again the scene. He killed the man in the dawn, standing on an open street against the prairie. He has never forgotten the look in the dying man's eyes, but what he did he did for a friend, and he is glad. That's what his ravings told me, sir. And he told me, sir, when he himself was about to die." He reached out to steady the governor's arm. What's wrong with you, sir?"

"I—I seem ——"

"You'll have to talk louder, sir."

"I seem to be done in. I've been on my feet—I—I need sleep."

"Why don't you turn in, then?"

"Th-thanks! I will! And you?"

"Presently."

Loomis did not make good his word. The clock in the church told hour after hour, and still he remained abroad, prowling the grounds and the deserted, starlit street. Each time that his restless circuit brought him within sight of the

governor's dark windows he gave himself up to anger.

"Sleeping! Sleeping the sleep of the just!"

He was torn between that and something else. The soft night wind, coming down over the body of the island, touched his lips and nostrils with the taste and perfume of peace. He seemed to see it as a thing resurrected—the villages, the new parish schools, the little estates of sugar and cocoa and limes. . . . He seemed to see a man pledging it with hands uplifted and eyes shining curiously in the moon: "That's what your *murderer* has done!" . . . He saw a man creeping up out of a mist-pool with an old black woman on his back.

"Damn it! Damn it! What's right after all?"

He continued to roam. The stars faded to the coming of the morning moon. His eyes caught the black windows of the governor's chamber again, and again he stiffened his shoulders and raised his chin.

"No, no, no! Neither one way or another am I the judge. I'm an officer of police. I'm not a jury; I'm a messenger, a machine."

In the moonlight, far out on the skyline, a wisp of smoke stood up. The *Paramaribo* was coming, swinging in from its northward course to pick up the officer—and his prisoner.

A kind of panic laid hold of Loomis. The thought of running in, pounding up the stairs, battering at the governor's door, crossed his mind

and even as he stared at the entrance under the portico he saw the governor coming out.

The man had not slept, after all. He had not taken off his clothes. He looked tousled and musty. Red puffs stood under his eyes.

"Loomis," he cried, coming straight down, "I've got something to say to you."

"What?" asked Loomis, waiting squarely across the path.

"This. Just—well ——" The governor took his arm in a nervous grip and pulled him toward the beach. "Let's have a turn."

They went at a breathless pace. Just as when they had strolled on the same beach the other night in the moonrise, now, in the hour before dawn, there was a long, easeless silence. When words did come to the governor's lips, they tumbled out in a rush. He talked against time, against thought, against everything. He seized on the thing nearest in time, the fever at Two Roads.

"Bad, sir, shocking bad! . . . But not so bad as last time; a year ago in St. Barnabas Parish. Not by a jolly sight. Another time again, and it will be still easier to master, I fancy. It grows less. We shall have it in hand in time—in—in time. If only I am—if only I could be given—time. Time, sir!" It was the cry of a man going down. One realized that, of a sudden; the last cry of a forlorn hope that has come to its end.

In the growing half-light where the palm-boles stood up from the sand like gray iron bars, Loo-

mis caught hold of his elbow and brought him to a halt.

"But this isn't what you came out to tell me, sir."

"I came to tell you—to ask you if you mightn't be wrong—about White. Are you sure—sure as life and death, sir—that he said what you say he said?"

"I am."

"But a confession may not be —— It won't always hold. And the man was out of his mind, you know."

"That simply doubles the value of the evidence, doesn't it, sir?"

"Or else he *wasn't*. See here; he knew you were there? Yes! Suppose, then, that it was all a bit of acting ——"

"Does a man *act* on his deathbed?"

"Not—not any man—except—Jim White. . . . And I won't have it! I tell you I can't let him go under with that!"

"Then, sir, by all this, you mean to say ——?"

"I mean to say ——"

The little governor of St. Katherine was shivering from head to foot. The dawn came. In the pink light his eyes went about him in a swift survey of the kingdom he had brought to life. And then his bloodless lips framed the word of his confession.

But Loomis was too quick. Loomis, springing forward, had a hand over the lips. At sight of an act, a gesture, a word ready to be given, a

miracle had happened. He was no longer torn. His course lay clear. In a wink he saw himself judge and jury. He barked like a dog in his nervousness.

"No, no; I won't hear any more of this. My case is complete. . . . Look there! The *Paramaribo!* Lord! sir, but I must hurry!"

And with that he turned and was gone, running along the beach toward Government House. . . . In his chamber he flung his things together, crammed them into his bags; he tiptoed hastily out through the empty halls.

A pink-white longboat was coming in to the beach. The governor of the island stood on the sand, watching it, his hands clasped tightly behind his back. Loomis dropped his bags beside him for a moment, rubbed his hands, shuffled his feet awkwardly.

"I'm afraid I shall have to ask you to express my respects and gratitude to my hostess. It's so confoundedly early, and I didn't care to bother her—and the haste and all ——" He extended his hand. "And as for you, sir. . . . Well, I admire your work here!"

His expression underwent an abrupt change. It was as if he had a "second thought." He dropped the bags, which he had caught up again.

"By George! sir. One thing. There was something which mystified me when I first came. One of the few things you *didn't* ask me—and one I should have thought you would have asked first—was whether or not I happened to

have about me a photograph of the man—Doctor Carnes. The whole point of the matter was that I *had.*"

He drew a cabinet photograph of a young man from his coat pocket, glanced from the pictured face to the living one before him, and then, with the slightest inclination of the head, tore it across and across and let the pieces fall in the water at his feet.

"It was the only one we could find in Canada," he explained. "Naturally, it is of no use now. . . . Good-by, Your Excellency!"

Turning about, he walked to the waiting boat.

ALWAYS SUMMER

THOUGH the sloop lay at anchor in a tidy place, well under the reef, there hung about her person an air of singular untidiness. The halyards had been let go and that was all; the mainsail lay all over the port side where it had come bellying below, the staysail had jammed three-quarters down, and the jib was fouled to the bobstay. There was no sound. Had the two men, the one on deck and the one in the cubby, been interested they could have heard the trade wind slatting the fronds of the cocopalms away on the beach, where they began to stand out now on the gray that comes and goes swiftly before the West Indies dawn.

By her rig she would have come from one of the French islands. Marie Galante, in fact, was the hailing port given under the name, *La Reine de la Mer* on the battered stern. But it was at Gaudeloupe that they had the pestilence—*La Vérette.*

The two words, *"La Vérette,"* had been the last on the black man's lips and that was an hour ago. Now he lay quite still beside the wheel box, his head and his satiny shoulders doubled over toward his middle, making a figure not unlike a question mark, an awkward interrogation put to the sky.

In the sloop's cubby the air was already heavy with abomination. The body in the bunk athwartships had been the property of a white man, though it would have been hard to say it now, for the lovers of *La Vérette* come masked to the tryst. By his clothing he might have been a commercial traveler. Or he might have been a tourist, cut off from his ship by the smallpox and taking any means of escape from the pestilent city. He might, indeed, have been anything. By the plain gold ring on his left hand he would have been "W. E. F.," unless by chance he were "M. F." And the papers in the inner pocket of his coat would have settled that—would have fixed him for Waldo Emerson Fellows, an American traveling in the Caribbean "for pleasure"—or possibly for another reason. It mattered very little now. . . .

Day came swiftly. Light fell out of the zenith, and in an instant the world was on fire with a white and pitiless flame. It showed the raw, hard, peacock-colored sea; it showed the beach livid where the palms threw it in shadow. It picked out a skiff half-beached on the sand and beside it the figure of a white man, sitting cross-legged and staring back across the water at the sloop under the reef. His eyes were wide and the lids crusted, as if it had been a long time since they had winked.

Seeming by a gesture of the head to realize for the first time that night was done, he made an

attempt to get up, and finally did get up and started off unsteadily across the sand. But when he had gone a few steps he came back and looked at the sloop and at the skiff. He did not want the skiff there. He set about casting it adrift. He made hard work of it; pain furrowed his brow and perspiration filled the furrows. When he had got it free at last he remained watching till the wind had taken hold of it. Then, lurching slightly from side to side, he went back up the sand and entered among the trees. He stumbled once over a log hidden in creepers and lay prone for a while, himself half-hidden by the creepers. The heavy, vegetal breath of the jungle enveloped him.

About noon a torrential rain came down from the mountain and erased from the beach the footprints and the scar of the boat's keel, leaving the sand unmarred again as it had been for years out of mind, and as it was to remain for other years out of mind under the empty Caribbean sky.

There was something not altogether right about the creole planter Basil. He was certainly not a native of Dominica, where his limegroves clung to the shoulder of a wild green mountain, nor was it probable that he had come from any other of the British colonies. It was vaguely presumed that he had originated in some one of the French islands. Noémi, the *fille de couleur* from Martinique, had it in her

head that this was not so, for he was never comfortable in the patois. But, after all, who was Noémi?

He had just now arisen from his noonday nap. As he sat in his pajamas at the writing table in the big, cool, gray-timbered room, one finger tapping idly on the tumbler of lime and gin which Noémi had brought with her customary low *"Bonsoué doudoux"*—seeing him so one could not have said that he was even by the faintest hint "out of the picture." Tall, spare, very slow of movement, his eyes cavernous under a rank growth of brows, his pock-pitted face showing the saving pallor under its tan (for only the bloodless may live in the tropics), he was no more nor less by a shade than the creole lime-planter of the British Caribbees. And more telling perhaps than any of these physical stigmata was the fact that, although there was a great stack of work on the desk to be got through, and though it was certain it *would be* got through, yet he could remain stretched out in his chair now for upward of an empty hour, his finger tapping on the glass, his eyes dreaming on the tumbled blue and green ravines sprawling up beyond the valley of the Roseau. . . .

"What is it?" he asked, after that time, feeling rather than hearing Noémi's soft approach.

"A man for see you, *ché*."

"Yes—yes ——" He lifted the tumbler, drank, and set it down. "Yes? Right! Where is he? What does he want? Eh?"

"He rest in carriage there, *doudoux.* See, it is a letter."

Basil tore open the envelope and perused the contents, following the lines aloud and bringing up each sentence with a "So? H'mmm!"

"It's the undermanager," he explained. "I wanted the Fruit people to send somebody out—So! H-mmm! By the Royal Mail, eh? That must have been the *Chignecto* came in. So! H'mmm! Bitterhouse, eh? 'Allen Kay Bitter——' " He lay with his mouth half open while the watch at his elbow ticked a dozen seconds away. Then, mechanically, his breath came, bringing out the remainder of the word "*'house'!*"

He lifted his head and looked at Noémi. Ordinarily she would have smiled, being looked at. Now, instead of smiling, she uttered a brief, vibrant syllable of interrogation.

He made no answer; perhaps he had not heard. Getting to his feet, he groped for the table, but the thing had somehow got around on the wrong side of him.

"Damn! I'm not well, 'Ti. I—I'm knocked out, 'Ti. I—I——"

Still groping, he started to walk toward the door of his own room.

"I don't want him. I—I've changed my mind. I say—— Devil take it! I don't want. Tell him to go 'way. 'Ti! Do you hear? Damn it all!"

Even his anger went to pieces.

"Noémi; *'Ti* Noémi—tell him to go 'way—for God's sake, 'Ti ——"

He seemed to realize that he was making a fool of himself. Returning to the chair, he sat down. His fingers, where they gripped the arms, showed bluish white.

"This won't do. Let me think. Let me think."

But he could not think. The watch on the table ticked the seconds away, the ponderous minutes, and there was not time to think. A diffused brilliance, the huge sunlight of the tropic afternoon cast upward from a hundred million leaves, molded the detail of his features.

Bitterhouse, the American, had grown tired of waiting in the sun. Basil heard footfalls, but he seemed unable to move. From the doorway at his right there came a sound like a sob, or not so much a sob as like a deep breath broken suddenly by the closing of teeth and lips.

After a moment the planter said "Yes?" without turning his head. When the silence continued he repeated it; "Yes? Yes?"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Basil? I—You have my credentials?"

"Yes, yes. A pleasure, I assure you, Mr.—Bitterhouse, isn't it? Will you sit down—here—no, here. You'll have a fine view here. Some people have called it as fine as anything in Europe, perhaps too kindly. . . . By the way—about the credentials ——"

They talked. To Noémi, a familiar presence

in the background, it seemed almost that they talked too much, too well. In the common run of conversation there will come pauses from moment to moment, needing no defense, or else filling themselves easily with an interchange of glances. But there were no pauses now, no silences to be filled up. It seemed to Noémi, indeed, that each of them was definitely not meeting the other's eyes. And as they continued their abstracted give-and-take their faces betrayed the working of a subtle change; in the huge refracted light they grew pinched and more and more bloodless and dry, like paper masks—till one of them crumpled.

It was Bitterhouse. He got to his feet so abruptly as to overturn his chair, and the clatter set him off in a shivering fit.

"Good God!" he stammered. "This is—*terrible!*"

His face was no longer dry; sweat poured down his cheeks. Careless of everything, he started headlong for the door, but stopped before he reached it and whirled about-face.

"No, I'm *not* crazy! I tell you, *I am not crazy!* Do you think I'm a fool—a crazy, blind fool? I know! I know as well as anybody that Waldo Fellows is dead—dead and buried a good ten years. And *more! Eleven* years!"

If he was not crazy, he was very near it. The words came tumbling out of his mouth.

"Don't tell me—don't try to tell me you're *not*——"

The planter passed a hand over his eyes, and then, rising slowly, turned to face the charge.

"All right." His voice sounded unstrung and weary. "Yes, Kay. Yes. All right."

Night came. Under the darkness the twisted cardboard mountains seemed not to recede, but rather to press close and topple higher over the roofs of the estate. It was a little cooler, but heavy, the air struck through with the sweet, dank breath of vegetation. Shower-whispers came and went glittering across the starlight. From the veranda the river could be heard tumbling in the gorge a thousand feet below; and other sounds, low rustlings and hissings and twitterings, a single far ululation, all the multitudinous small life of the mountain jungles awakening to the dark. The voices on the veranda rose and fell in uneven periods, mingling with the wide orchestration.

"And so, seeing the fellow was done for, I slipped my ring on his finger and stuck a few papers in his pocket and came away. I was sick, too—darn near died myself, Kay. And that would have been a joke. . . . But tell me—how did they all take it, eh?"

Bitterhouse answered with deliberation, still picking his words.

"Well, you may imagine. You see, we had the news of your—well, your death, the better part of a month before the—the ——"

"Before the examiner happened to get around to my books, eh? And that made a—*difference.*"

"Well, in the nature of things ——"

"Surely, surely. . . . How about Pete Noyes? Ever amount to anything, after all? And the Breckenbridge girls ——"

Their voices went on, rambling, disembodied, without end. To a casual listener there would have seemed no pattern in it all, no intention. And yet there was a pattern and an intention, a growing uneasiness, a definite avoidance. The tiny night noises seemed to withdraw, leaving an electric silence. Pauses multiplied, each longer and more unmanageable than the last, and all but one of them bringing up with a labored something that meant nothing. This one the planter ended by sitting up suddenly in his hammock.

"'Ti!" he called. His voice was sharp and pitched too high.

Noémi, rising out of the near dark came to his side.

"'Ti see here. I'm sure Mr. Bitterhouse could do with a punch, and I'm dry, too. Your own, now; that's a good girl. That black boy in the pantry is too long on the sugar—*much.* Eh?"

"Oui, Missié Basil—Fallows!" she ended with a flicker of laughter and went away, soundless as a Zombi woman.

Neither man spoke for a while. The silence piled itself up like an inverted pyramid, top-heavy.

"Well?"

"Yes—well?"

"You haven't told me, Kay, how—er—anything about Marion—about my wife—and the little girl."

"They are both well, happy, good, beautiful."

"They are? Happy, eh?" Fellows lay back again in the depths of the hammock. "I've wondered if they were happy," he added, by and by, with a hint of self-defense.

The situation got out of hand again. He had hoped Bitterhouse would offer to go on, but Bitterhouse held his peace. There was even in his dark immobility a certain vague quality of defiance.

"Do you know, Kay, sometimes I've almost thought of going back. Even to the point of facing the music." There was a sound in the dark of the hammock as though he turned over on his other side. "I've wondered, Kay, sometimes, if they'd be glad to see me. Eh?"

"I don't know." Getting up, Bitterhouse walked to the railing and stared down into the black pool of the gorge. "I don't know," he repeated, in a precise, hard voice, "about *her,* and your daughter. . . . I'm quite sure the *others* wouldn't be glad."

"Wha-what? Kay!"

"Her husband, I mean. And her son."

A droning note hung in the air, sustained, ghostly, coming from far away. Beyond the mountain the Royal Mail was swinging her head offshore, bound south. Noémi came with tinkling tumblers. . . .

Fellows himself showed Bitterhouse to the

room he was to occupy, bade him good night twice over, and then did not go.

"It took me pretty well between the eyes." He came out with it abruptly.

"Yes—I can imagine."

Both of them looked haggard in the candlelight.

For a long time after that, how long he could not say, Bitterhouse walked about his darkened chamber or stood for minutes at a time, staring from one or another of the unglazed windows. When he walked he reeled a little and put out groping hands; when he stood still he stood very still. The night touched him with warm, perspiring fingers, and it was all strange. It was more than strange. His eyes saw things in the dark; his eardrums had grown sensitive as a cat's, he heard microscopic sounds far off, serpents sliding among the tree stems, soft thuddings, inexplicable stirrings. From away downvalley in some black's *ajoupa* there came the faint beat of a chant, accompanied on a crude *tambou,* monotonous, barbaric, and somehow incredibly sinister and abominable, like the heart of the island throbbing in the night. He was drunk with that curious nervous exaltation which attacks men new in the tropics, and he was frightened. . . .

There were others who did not sleep. Habit got the planter into his room and ready for bed, but when the light was out he could not stay. A searching restlessness drove him abroad in

his pajamas and *chinois* to pace the veranda, up and down, up and down, interminably, like a creature telling the iron boundaries of a cage. Once he stood beside the railing and stared down for a long while into the rustling dark. It was an old story to him, as old as the walls of a man's own house, or a man's own cell; night after night, year by year, he had lived with it and grown a part of it and forgotten it. Now of a sudden he found it strange. He remembered that he was a stranger.

"What am I doing here? What in the world am I doing here?"

His voice, disturbing the silence, was like the wonder of a child waking to the dark of an unfamiliar room.

Noémi watched from the shadow beyond the dim candlelight of the door, her head turning slowly on the supple pillar of her neck to follow his prison-tramp twelve paces that way, twelve paces back, avoiding the hammocks. Her eyes were troubled; her simple heart was oppressed with a dread of something incomprehensible and new, something which this *Missié* from America had brought in to mar the serene mirror of her life. And she hated him with all the unreasoning passion of her race.

She heard his door open and then his distracted footsteps padding through the house, furniture scraping, a faint clink of glasses handled on the sideboard. Afterward he came wandering to stand in the doorway near her. And seeing by

the light thrown across his cheek from behind that the *"Missiè's"* face was gray and shrunken, too, she was glad.

He started, after a moment, and craned into the gloom ahead. "Oh!" he said in a shallow voice.

The planter echoed him, "Oh!"

The confrontation caught them both off guard. There was no time for either to regain his poise. The small hours found them naked-nerved, raw, savage. Bitterhouse broke out.

"God! Waldo! It's mad! I tell you it's—it's all—wrong!"

"Wrong? What's wrong? Say!" The planter's voice was thin and ugly, like a whispering lash.

"Why, just your standing there, man! Your not being—your *being alive,* man!"

"Do you begrudge it?" Fellows advanced a step, his fingers gnawing at his palms. "Not my being alive. My being half—a quarter—my being a *tenth* alive. Do you begrudge it?"

The other's silence harried him on.

"That's fine of you, Bitterhouse, I must say. To begrudge me even the little scrap of life I've managed to save."

"You've no right to it!"

"I have!"

"You've no right. You gave it up. Damn it! Waldo, I tell you you gave it up. It's cheating!"

"Cheating?"

They were both shuffling and thrusting out

their heads and mouthing their words like a pair of boys.

"Cheating?" the planter cried again. "Tell me—say, tell me—who have I cheated but myself? Eh? Eh?"

"Eh? You want to know? Well, how about one woman, and her husband, and her children? Eh? How about them? Do you know what you are for them? Well, all your life you'll be a shadow hiding around the next corner; you'll be the sword hanging by a thread; you'll be—you'll be the ——"

He broke off there, his lips twitching and his face gray, and, swinging on his heels, went off blundering through the rooms.

The cloud which hangs over the crest of Diablotin had stretched a long finger across the stars; a sudden rain came down, blinding the night and rolling a full-bodied thunder over the roofs.

Fellows stepped to the door and bent his head to one side, listening through the house.

"Kay!" he called. *"Kay!"*

Feeling a hand on his shoulder, he turned to find Noémi at his side. A trace of hysteria ran in his voice.

"The damned fool! I swear I believe he's gone out in the rain."

"Oui doudoux. I have heard him go, yes."

For a moment he remained face to face with her, fascinated by the full, simple-minded revelation of her eyes.

"It'll kill him. He mustn't go out that way——"

"Why?"

"Why, because—— Good God alive! After *all!*"

Revulsion swept him. Getting rid of the encircling arm, he ran into the house and through the rooms and out of the door which the fugitive had left standing wide.

The lukewarm torrent enveloped him, filled his eyes, struck through to his skin. He realized that his errand was hopeless, and yet he continued to go forward, plunging, sliding, groping at nothing with invisible hands, muttering. "The damned fool—the damned fool!" abstractedly all the while.

He lost track of his ground. Bringing up with his face in the thatch of an *ajoupa,* he beat his fists on the mud-and-wattle wall; but if they heard inside they lay very still, knowing it could be only a *zombi* or a goblin desiring entrance at that time of night.

He was going downhill when he ought to have been going up. The frond of a tree fern pressed against his chest and whipped away with a great *swish,* like a ghost into Limbo. Roots tripped him; viny things took hold of his arms. He had got into the bush downhill, and he had to stand and take it, still muttering, "The damned fool!—the damned fool!"

The storm broke as swiftly as it had come. A crystal clarity flowed over the *Mornes* and ra-

vines, and through the silence ran a whisper of water drops falling on the floor of the jungle. He had not come far from the house, with all of it; seeing it black against the sky above, he made what haste he could through the tangle, for evaporation set in quickly and his plastered night-clothes seemed to be turning to ice.

He found Bitterhouse huddled in the big room, with a red face, dry lips, and a well-developed chill. He was muzzy and contrite. He had only been out a few moments himself, he explained between fits of shuddering. No, he did not change his clothing—it had dried quickly—it was quite dry now. When the planter gave him a tumbler of raw spirits to "put into him confounded quick" he choked on the stuff and made a bad mess of it. By dawn the fever had established itself. By noon it was out of hand.

To Bitterhouse the days and nights and the weeks dragged away like the pageant of an abominable dream. Seldom completely unconscious, on the other hand he was never quite rational. A veil was let down between him and the world. Beyond the veil things transpired, shapes passed and repassed—the phantasmal shape of a woman, tall, imponderable, moving with an incredible, feline sinuosity—like a tiger, somehow, made over into the wraith of a woman, velvet-eyed, penciled in a nimbus of dissolving jewel colors.

On his side of the veil it was sometimes stifling, till he seemed eaten by a living flame, and

sometimes he lay in a bed of ice and cried for warmth. It was best when he could sink back into the shadows and doze and almost forget it all for a while. . . .

When he awoke for the first time in his own mind it was night. Fellows was sitting not far from the bedside, his elbows on his knees, his shoulders fallen together, and his fingers run comb-wise through his disordered hair. Bitterhouse thought that the hair looked as though Fellows had been standing on his head in a refuse heap, it was so neglected and unkempt, so blotched with gray and streaked with white. Bitterhouse thought it a most dilapidated head of hair.

When the planter looked up, hearing the patient stir, his face betrayed a curious fatigue, almost like the stamp of senility.

Bitterhouse said, "Hello!" It sounded silly.

Fellows passed a hand over his old eyes and opened them again.

"Oh—hello! Glad to see you." That sounded idiotic, too. He turned in his chair and called, quietly: "Noémi! I say, Noémi, bring that, will you?" But before she came with "that," whatever it was, Bitterhouse had closed his eyes and gone to sleep. . . .

In the days of his convalescence, through the languorous, cool, unfolding hours when all his faculties seemed to have been born again, and the commonest sensations—a ray of sunlight on

a flower, a bird-note, and straying perfume—became an adventure penetrating and profound, he began to understand what was wrong with Fellows.

Fellows had been drinking too much, that was the long and the short of it. West Indians as a rule are pretty regular at their cups—but that is one point about it—they *are* regular. There is an accepted time for this, a proper hour for that, vermouth at ten in the morning, *swizzles* at tea. Bitterhouse knew nothing of this tropic ritualism of drink, but he did know that it was not right, under any sky whatever, for a man to be fooling around the sideboard at dawn, and to come in to eleven-o'clock breakfast quite steady on his feet, perhaps, and perfectly apt with the table silver, yet with a look and a sense about him of a man in another dimension, a ghost in the land of living, a queer thing. He talked coherently enough at all times; it was simply that he was not thinking about what he said. And day by day the gray spread over his head.

It got on Bitterhouse's nerves. It irritated him to an absurd degree, marring the perfect mirror of the days. Had Fellows but been decent he could just have gone on lying there in his hammock, saturated with the vast inundation of light, stricken to the core with the frankincense and pulvil of an embowered world, watching the river of the hours. In truth he had been born again. The tropics, the awful Mother of Man, had taken him quickly, purging him with fire of all

the racking ambitions and anxieties, and the realities of memory. The past had slipped very far away leaving him stranded in the flowered islands of Now.

Fellows alone jarred. He could see no beauty in this day-to-day degeneration of Fellows. He could see beauty in Noémi now. Her sinister, caressing presence, the supple flow of her limbs and body in motion, the dark, exotic luminosity of her eyes, the whole barbaric splendor of her hatred, ran in with this dream-world of the senses.

But against the planter he would sometimes cry out:

"What's the matter? Say! What is the matter? I'll tell you what, you're a sick man. That's what, Waldo, a damn sick man. You ought to take a run somewhere; you ought to go north for a while."

It was odd that he could never think what he was saying till it was too late. Then there came a moment when he would have given his tongue to have the words back; an instant when forgotten actualities came near to breaking through on him, when his eyes grew uneasy and a sweat of weakness rolled down his skin.

Sometimes Fellows answered him with a sardonic gesture and talk of other things—the new planting on Morne Rouge, or the perversity of the mulatto teamster, McGuire. Sometimes, when he was more than ordinarily drunk, he would simply stand and glare at Bitterhouse, malignant, helpless, like a man who has been

struck and who would strike back if he knew how. One evening, when they had been sitting a long while at table in the big room, he did strike back, with a question of his own.

"Do you know what day it is?"

"Do I know what *day* ——"

"It's the eighth day of February. And tomorrow will be the *ninth*."

Bitterhouse stared at him with his mouth hanging half ajar. He felt idiotic himself. He was taken with a wild desire to break out laughing: "And what the devil has *that* got to do with it?" But something in Fellows's face kept him quiet.

The minutes dragged. Two candles, one at either hand, picked out the planter's face and shoulders with an uncertain cross-fire, showing him a little twisted in the depths of his chair, his chin sunk in his neck, his eyes engrossed in the glass of brandy and soda on the table before him. Like a crystal-gazer, he seemed to be keeping track of an event invisible to the other.

Bitterhouse found himself taken in against his will.

"See here ——" He hesitated. "Why the eighth—especially? Or the ninth? What's the —idea?"

The planter gave no sign of having heard. It made Bitterhouse nervous, this sense that had grown in the past days of not being able to come at Fellows at all, as though the other's spirit could

at will evacuate the shell of his body and be off to another country. It gave him the fidgets. It was too queer. Getting to his feet, he began to wander about the room with his own shadow. For the first time since the fever he felt the heaviness of the night; he felt the air hot and moist, not with the indomitable life of the jungle, but with the crowding death it fed upon.

He found himself face to face with Noémi in the outer shadows. Their eyes met, and he could not turn away, for she had hold of his hands and he heard her speaking and saw her groveling.

"You will go by that *bom*ship to-morrow morning, yes *Missié?* That *Demerara* she will come in Roseau just to-morrow morning—she is a good, fine *bom*ship—you will be happy, *oui, Missié.* You will go away quick-quick from *Dominque* here, *oui, doudoux?* Yes, yes, yes, sir, *Missié*—yes?"

She hated him, and she was caressing his hands and arms. That seemed more horrible than anything else in this heavy night. He made her let go of him and, turning, found Fellows's eyes fixed on him.

"Yes, Kay, you'll go back home. On one *bom*ship or another. Not on the *Demerara,* though, because she's bound south. . . ."

In a moment, and without apparent reason, Fellows had come back. For the first time in days there were body and character in his voice and he was thinking of what he said.

"You'll go, of course, sooner or later. We

weren't made for this country, you and I, Kay. If we don't have to fight—that's a funny thing about us, Kay; if we don't have to fight for our lives, we just peter out and die. It's never cold enough here to have to keep warm. The leaves never fall off the trees. It's a land where you drop a seed on the ground and a red flower grows up, day and night, night and day, and it drops seeds and they grow up and drop seeds, and they all choke one another and strangle the earth, and when you look, Kay, you can't see anything but red flowers; you can't smell anything but red flowers —you can't see a gray rock or a black dump behind a factory—you can't smell leaves burning in the fall—or anything. . . ."

He lifted his glass, set it down untouched, and for a moment continued staring into its luminous core. Bitterhouse came back to his chair on tiptoe.

"Leaves burning," the planter mused. "Do you remember, Kay, one day when you and I and Pete Noyes were walking out the Newbury road from Academy, all three of us talking about what we were going to do with our precious lives? Perhaps you don't. I do. I remember the look of the sky, hard, awkward clouds in ledges, gray and dirty white, down close to earth. It was going to snow. You could taste it in the wind, remember, and it smarted our faces. Somebody was burning leaves along a fence, and the wind brought the smoke across us. And I remember how the lights began to spark out in the machine-shops across

the river, and how black the river was, and how we had to put our shoulders into the wind. And how Pete said he wished it was always summer, and we said yes . . . *always summer!*"

Bitterhouse was still terribly weak. Then, too, he had never seen this side of Fellows. He wept quietly and without pain. He saw Fellows as a blur floating between two watery moons, and he wanted to say something to Fellows, but for his life he could not think of the right words. So he could only sit there, watching Fellows grow more blurred and phantasmal, and wait.

A warm wind shouldered through the house, blowing the candles. By and by the hush was broken by a tiny thud, a scarcely perceptible fault in the air, like a weight falling a great way off.

The planter lifted his head. "Noémi! What is it? Was that the cannon? Noémi!"

"Oui, c'est, bom-là, ché."

"The ship? Not the *Demerara*—so quick? What?"

"Oui, doudoux. It would be morning now quick-quick."

"So! H'mmmm!"

His eyes went back to the brandy and soda before him. He lifted the glass to his lips and set it down again with a faint expression of disgust, muttering, "It has gone flat."

He got up and fumbled among the siphons and decanters on the sideboard, still muttering. When

he came back with the new glass he presented it high between the candles.

"I give you," he pledged, "a rough life and a gray sky!" When he had set down the empty glass he repeated, "A good gray sky!"

Bitterhouse leaned forward on his hands. He felt queer inside, as if his stomach had been taken out.

"What makes you talk like that?" he asked, in a thin voice.

Fellows touched his lips with a handkerchief. He seemed preoccupied and stared at the empty glass.

"We thought you were going to die," he said, "in the fever there. The doctors—both the doctors we had up—said so. I thought I ought to cable some one—if there was anyone to cable."

Bitterhouse got up. "What?" he said. "What?"

"I found a letter in your pocket addressed to Mrs. Bitterhouse—Mrs. Allen Kay Bitterhouse. I cabled her."

Bitterhouse let himself down in his chair, ran the back of a hand across his lips, and repeated his vacuous "What? What?"

"I was pretty dull. It wasn't till after I had sent the cable that I began to think how odd it was you hadn't mentioned, not once, in all our talk, that you were married. After that—I went through your things."

"You—went through my things?" It was Bitterhouse who had been taken "between the

eyes" this time, and he had nothing but wrath to fall back upon. "You say you went through my *things*. Why, damn it! man, what—*what—earthly right had you ——?*"

"Right?"

The planter leaned toward him, and the candles showed a gleam of bared teeth. He shook himself together and laughed a little.

"You see, she had cabled that she was coming," he went on. "That she was sailing the twenty-eighth, on the *Demerara,* due here around the ninth. . . . And you ask me if I had the *right!*"

Bitterhouse lifted himself to his feet slowly and, turning half around, stuck an awkward thumb toward the night of the veranda.

"That boat? You mean—Marion is on—that boat—out there?"

The planter inclined his head.

"And—the children?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know?"

"No. She didn't say."

"She didn't say?"

It was absurd to hear them go on worrying the silence with their empty voices. They stood staring at each other's eyes across the ant-eaten mahogany table, as it were idly. A spasm of pain convulsed the planter's face for an instant and went away. Bitterhouse remained dull and expressionless.

"She will come up here?" he said, by and by.

"Yes, she will ask the way—I suppose."

"Well?"

"Yes—well?"

Bitterhouse turned and walked to the door.

"It's lightening," he said, after a moment. His voice sounded lazy. "It will be light in a little while—dawn—daylight."

A false flush ran over the hills. As he watched it come and go he heard Fellows speaking in the room behind him.

"Don't worry," he was saying. "I—well, I'll keep out of the way."

Bitterhouse wanted to laugh. It was such a funny thing to say. It sounded as if Marion would be dropping in for just a cup of tea. Yes, it was too funny of Fellows to say that.

He heard a thud in the room. Fellows had fallen down on the floor. Turning, he saw him trying to get up on his feet again. That was funny, too—to think of all the cumulative drunkenness of Fellows suddenly popping out and knocking him down. And to hear Fellows going on in his befuddled voice, "I—I—keep out o'—o'—way ——" His face was twisted in a funny fashion, too.

Noémi was there, breaking swiftly across the candle-light. Bitterhouse watched her, fascinated, wondering what she would do. He saw her hesitate beside the table, struck still for an instant; then with a swift, sure gesture she took up the planter's empty glass and passed it twice below

her face, sniffing, sniffing at the exhalation of its poisonous, drying rim.

"What is it?" he heard himself saying. He asked the question three or four times over in the same flat whisper, though he knew already what it was. He seemed to have known a long time, somehow.

He watched her take up the fallen figure and bear it away through the door of a bedchamber, carrying it easily in her arms, like a crumpled child. . . .

When Marion Bitterhouse drove up the road to the mountain that morning she did not know whether her husband was dead or alive. It was an intolerably cruel thing, having to get ahead so slowly, to watch the hired horses creep and droop along the embowered precipices. And yet it was somehow even more terrible when she found him—almost passed him by—huddled at the roadside and crying like a child with a broken heart.

And then he couldn't tell her what it was; he couldn't seem to make head or tail of it in words. . . . He was glad she had come; she found that out, for one thing. And he wanted to go north.

AT TWO-IN-THE-BUSH

TAKE out your atlas and turn to the map of the world on the equivalent projection. Draw a line from New York to the Cape of Good Hope, and another from Vera Cruz to Liverpool. At the intersection of those two lines, a microscopic outpost remote in the sea, lies St. George's; the harbor turquoise and apple green; the town as white as a sepulcher, save where it is slashed sparsely with the green palmettoes and pawpaws and the warmer emerald of bananas crowding their rags between the snowy walls.

A great many queer things turn up first or last (generally last) at St. George's. I've lived there a number of years, and as local representative of Swineherd Brothers Ship Corporation of Newcastle-on-Tyne I've had to do with a few of them. Sucked out of the rims of that slow, gigantic whirlpool of the North Atlantic, more than one ocean wanderer, meant for better things, has come creeping at last to throw her lines over the coral quay of that market square and stare across with who-knows-what of wonder or chagrin at the vitreous façade of the inn called Two-in-the-Bush, where captains and mates sit interminably over their rum and lime juice behind the sun-parlor panes. . . .

We live on two planes at St. George's. There's the lower plane of our workaday lives—the square, the coal on the coal stages, the ships on the water, the Africans in the shops, the captains and mates, and Two-in-the-Bush. . . . There's the upper, rarer plane—the huge, half-empty white hotel on the hill where the winter visitors come, look down upon us briefly, and retreat again over the hills to the polite end of the islands, where tourist steamers dock, and where inns and lodges, hotels and tea houses swarm with the morning, noon, and night of holiday. Altogether it lends to a place that needs it badly more than half a touch of the *opéra bouffe*.

Sometimes on an evening in the season the more presentable of us make raids. We put on our tail coats, climb up the hill to the hotel, look over the five or six beautiful and desolate strays from the western continent, give up, have another drink, and find ourselves presently regravitating to the dance orders of the garrison wives, who have been watching and waiting, as of old, of old. And when the black men feel midnight in the air, turn almost anything into "God Save the King," and pack up the fiddle and drum, then we creep downward again into the familiar dark. Our coat-tails flap behind us across the empty square; we laugh with faint sneers, sigh, and know we're home again.

"That's the kind of a life, now!"

"Right you are. It wasn't so in war time, what?"

No, no winter visitors, no hotel blazing on the hill in war time. But business at Two-in-the-Bush was fine. Captains and mates in plenty rested in the sun-parlor those days at their houses' expense, and some had shrapnel bits in their stomachs in place of rum and lime.

I believe there wasn't another town on earth that took the armistice with less noise and a deeper sense of change than did St. George's. The black folks made a bit of hullabaloo, it's true, but where the thing struck deep was at Two-in-the Bush, and, deepest of all, on the bridges and poop decks of the ships that cleared port that night under the half-forgotten miracle of running lights. I've met one of those captains since, and he assured me it made him feel as self-conscious for the first watch or so as a schoolboy in a Sunday collar. . . .

Just then was a natural and proper time to cast up accounts. All in all, from the first of the raiders to the last U-boat, my firm had lost seven ships—or eight? And when it came to that hesitant, appended "—or eight?" the reckoning found itself uncomfortably in the air. It was abominable, that cloud lagging in the blue sky of peace. But on the seventh day of the armistice the *Rose of England,* as fine a steel cargo steamer as a man wants to see, was three days overdue at the Azores for what was to have been her home-bound convoy. At the fortnight she was ten days overdue. Then "missing" at Lloyd's. There was something espe-

cially distressing about that, like the pathos of the boys who lost their lives in the last minute of the war.

Even that wasn't the reason, though, that we St. Georgians fought so long for hope. The other ships my house had lost remained nothing but names printed in their bimonthly communications —sad, of course; damnable—but the *Rose of England* was another matter. It was in our own harbor she had last been seen; St. David's Light must have been her last glimpse of the land. Bound home from the West Indies, she had lain six days with us—and six days in an ocean outpost, and especially in war time, is enough to make new friends old and dear.

It had been a little interlude of forgetfulness and gaiety, a sort of fête. Captain Erd had his wife with him; her and two other English women, schoolma'ams from Port of Spain, he was undertaking to get home. So we made a party—the three ladies, Captain Erd, his first officer, Edward Greaves, and myself, as official representative of the owners. We had shut out the war; we had gone for picnics; Mrs. Erd and Greaves and I had made a rusty but light-hearted threesome on the garrison links; and we had even managed a ball in the dining room at Two-in-the-Bush. That was the night before they left, a dancing, laughing farewell—"we who are about to die ——"

I'm not a sentimental sort, I know, but the memory of that night, turned so tragic, used to take

me somewhere in the middle and make me pucker up my eyes and blow my nose.

It wasn't anything in the dance hall I remembered so poignantly. It was in the ragged palm garden below, where Mary Erd and Greaves and I had descended to catch a breath of air. What a creature she looked, standing in the faint light filtering down through the fronds from the windows overhead. What a woman she was, with her buoyant carriage, the warm crown of her chestnut hair, her gray English eyes, her lips half parted to the lift of youth! I remembered her so; and the other thing I remembered was Greaves's eyes, drinking her in!

Faithful? Greaves was one of those lean, raw-cheeked, hawk-nosed seamen who are built like the oak for faith—a whole wood of oaks. His commander was his commander and his personal friend. Greaves himself didn't even suffer. He was the sort who wouldn't even know. But, Lord alive! a stranger could tell where the man's heart was. . . .

You may imagine, perhaps, what a dismal relic a memory like that would make of itself afterward, under the circumstances.

"With our beauty, our strength, our laughter, youth, honesty and deep faithfulness, we who are about to die salute you!"

But Greaves wasn't to die, after all. Greaves came back. A lime schooner put him ashore at Barbadoes, twenty-one days after the armistice was

signed—Greaves in the flesh. The first news I had of it was in the cable notes in the *Colonial Islander,* and as I read it I had the feeling a man has who doesn't know he's still been hoping against hope—till he gets the definite crack in the head.

I was glad for Greaves, of course (though even then there was the formless suspicion that I shouldn't be). But as for the *Rose of England* and the rest of them, it was "Finis" printed clean and black.

Three days out from us, almost in the hour of the war's conclusion, the *Rose of England* had been chased by a U-boat, one of the big submersible cruisers, and shelled into surrender. Captain Erd had been killed on the bridge by the first shot that struck. Greaves himself had gone through the ironic and hopeless gesture of raising the white flag. (I can see his face.) Ordered by signal to abandon ship, they had made hard weather of it in the boats, a fairly heavy sea running under fog and rain and carrying them down so fast alee that they knew nothing of the *Rose of England's* end beyond the dull thuds of the attacker firing salvos from her two guns. Greaves himself had been picked up seven days later with three other men alive in the boat, two West Indian negroes and a Danish quartermaster. That was all there was. That was the sum of words coming out to us from that obscure and tragic event—for the time being. . . .

Then, when memory was trying to heal and the

world going on again in its orbit, who should turn up but Greaves himself. I was coming across the square at noon, and I saw him planted on the sidewalk before the entrance to Two-in-the-Bush. Winter visitors were beginning again; a bevy pried and peeped into the curio windows at his back. Against their colorful frivolity he stood out stark and bleak and gray as an image cut in the grayest rock.

I didn't know what to say. In the end, of course, I came out with the old thing:

"Where in the *world* did *you* come from?"

"I got in on the Royal Mail from the south this morning."

"Bound home, I suppose?"

"I—I don't know." His eyes left mine. He looked all around. I had a sense in the man of an obscure embarrassment.

"Well, come along upstairs, for Heaven's sake!"

And then, even in the sun-parlor, with a wicker table between us and the serene whiteness pouring over us and our mortal frames at rest—even then there seemed nothing to say. Of course there were a hundred things. A dozen questions swarmed through my mind, but I simply couldn't. As for Greaves, he sat as dumb as a log.

"Well?" I cleared my throat at last. I struggled. "Well, how did—did——" My resolution went lame. "How did—how did Tito take it?"

We ought both to have laughed at my funking. I can't say why my mind, shying clear of all the names I cared about, should have grasped at "Tito." Unless it were that I had happened one day to speculate as to how a human animal like Tito would "stand the gaff" in some hypothetical moment of peril. I had seen him once on board the *Rose of England* and more than once ashore during that week. A huge creation of flesh, black as tar, straight from the Ivory Coast through one generation in the Caribbean jungles of Dominica—they had pointed him out to me as the bully of the forecastle. I could believe it. And bully of the shore, too. A babe in mind, a three-year-old bullock in muscle, a peculiarly darksome and gale-rocked ape, one would say, in matters relating to the opposite sex. With his meat-red lips, his immense white flashing smile of teeth, his hot eyes, his barrel of a neck, his long arms —— Well, when the *Rose of England* cleared there were more brown watchers than one, in calico and madras, on the quay's edge to see her go, and their eyes were not on the bridge. . . . As I say, I had wondered most casually what a creature like that would do in a pinch. It must have been this that wagged my despairing tongue, "How did Tito take it?"

I saw the knuckles of Greaves's hand on the table grow gray.

"*What* do you mean by *that?*"

This point-blank effect of my vapid query and

the sudden, virulent focusing of his eyes took me aback.

"Noth-nothing! Nothing at all! . . . Why?"

"I wondered."

But his queerness had jarred me into a franker attitude. "And Mary—Mrs. Erd? She—was in your boat?"

His eyes had abandoned mine and gone out to lose themselves in the white flare of the market place. His face, in the ruthless refraction of light, looked fleshless, a pack of bones covered with brittle skin.

"No," he said. "You understand I was the last to leave. I asked Mr. Bayly, the chief, to take charge of the ladies. He must have misunderstood. I spoke his boat for a moment an hour later. He was under the impression the ladies had gone with the second officer, Croode. He could say definitely that Miss Spence and Miss Talbot went over the side in his, Croode's, boat. And he supposed Mrs. Erd had ——"

Greaves got to his feet. He glanced down at me with a gleam of malignance, as if I had betrayed him into too long and bald a speech.

A home-bound boat sailed three days later. To my surprise Greaves failed to take passage.

"I'm fagged! My dear fellow, I want a bit of rest!" he protested, with a trace of sullenness, when I met him squarely in the street.

As a matter of course I had advised my people by cable upon Greaves's arrival. He was still in

their service and wearing the stripes of the Royal Naval Reserve. The day after the English boat sailed I received a message ordering Greaves to report at Newcastle. When I found him lying in his underclothes in the room he had taken above Thwaite & Coy, the colored grocers, he settled the business promptly. Requesting the loan of a fountain pen, he tore a leaf from a notebook and wrote out his resignation, which he asked me to be good enough to forward. Then he stretched himself once more on the mattress and stared at the ceiling.

Once only in the day that followed did he betray himself in words:

"This is the nearest place to where it happened, Canby."

I've said he was built like an oak for faith, and when that sort of thing goes queer it goes very queer indeed. You know the dog that cowers and starves and won't be driven away from the master's grave? It's something that has nothing to do with the brain, canine or human either.

It looked like just one more case of a man going on the beach. I had liked him immensely; there was still the memory of that week to be thought of; I tried to get hold of him. But one might as well have fondled an armadillo. Once I came upon him standing at the quayside staring out through the harbor entrance with dry, unblinking eyes. There was a three days' growth on his jaw. When a man like Greaves begins to neglect to

shave he is in a bad way. . . . It was shortly after that that he came down with the island fever and was removed to the military hospital in the parish beyond the hills. I saw him for an instant in the covered cart, and he looked to be on the road to find his lost ship's company now, in truth. . . .

It was near the beginning of January that the amazing thing happened. One of the minor amazements was that I should have been the last inhabitant of St. George's to know of it—I, the local and visible presence of the House. But it chanced that I was called to the west that forenoon, and so shortly before the first disturbance that, turning as the carriage came to the height of the hill, I saw something already wrong in the square below. One thing I observed was a scramble of midget men tumbling into a long boat at the quay, and another was black smoke pouring from the funnel of Buttercamp's tug. For a moment I had the impulse to turn back. But I didn't. I went on.

In a way I shall never forgive myself, for by that contravention of impulse I missed something a man ought to see. If you saw it in the papers you saw it badly done, a mere sapless procession of marine reporter's words, the husk around the rich, romantic meat of that event.

I lost it all: the first incredible hypothesis come down from St. David's and moving like a little wind through the white streets and the whiter square; the stouter, more authentic word, the man-

ning of long boats (I had a glimpse of *that*); the swifter eruption of tugboat after tugboat; the hour-by-hour gossip and shuffling and awe of the waiters ashore; the ordered succession of false alarms in the square. And then, at noon, the veritable presence between the headlands; the red loom of the carcass surrounded by its fringe of long boats and urging tugs, towering higher and higher, gaunter and gaunter, in its slow approach. Queer things have come to St. George's, but nothing queerer yet than that rusty, shell-bitten derelict given up out of the slow whirlpool of the sea. . . .

When I arrived finally, caught by telephone and almost killing the horse over the hills, the *Rose of England* was already made fast to the quay, shutting up the whole side of the square with her hulk. Booms held her ten feet clear of the rock and the curious throng. Buttercamp, Hebron, the pilot, and five or six of Buttercamp's men were waiting in a kind of formal group amidships. Leaning over the wrecked rail of the bridge, lofty, monumental, solitary as a desert lion, was Tito, the black man.

I knew already (so much over the 'phone) that it was Tito who had brought her in. Of course he hadn't actually *brought* her; any one lone man would have about as much influence upon a six-thousand-ton steamer gone dead as a flea on an elephant. Tito it was, however, who had been found alone on board when the winds and currents

of the ocean brought the *Rose of England* drifting within binocular range of St. David's Light; and Tito it was who would have to be reckoned with in subsequent proceedings under his Majesty's court of salvage.

He received me on board with the large, distrait tolerance of a potentate for an ambassador. He actually managed that pose. Buttercamp and the pilot joined me in that momentous midday tour of inspection. But first I heard Buttercamp bidding his men in the waist "stand tight and keep an eye out—till the magistrate arrives."

"What's the row?" I hated the man's red-tape mind.

"I thought best, sir." He indicated the scuppers on the port side of the deck.

The *Rose of England* still bore her dead, a floating charnel-house. And the child-of-the-jungle soul of that sea conqueror, preening and posturing before us, stood revealed.

Alone in the solitude of the ocean, his nose and lungs assailed in the blaze of hot noons, his eyes fearfully averted in the moonshine of pale nights (Can't you see him?), he had been able to endure everything to the last—everything but that actual, physical coming to grips with the dead. His progress fore and aft of the ship must have been a trouble of navigation, like the zigzag courses of a beat to windward, steering to clear the horrid environs of this and that. Nor could those dangers to the navigation of his feet have always

stood the same. Like Mississippi sand-bars, they must have been more or less continually shifting. The *Rose of England* had been through storms; a deck is smooth; things slide. Day by day, week by week, as they grow lighter and lighter under the ministrations of the sun, they will slide oftener and at less accountable moments in a seaway. So those small, red-lidded, half-averted eyes of Tito's must have been forever under the necessity of calculating new courses across the desert reaches of that deck (Can't you see those eyes?), and week by week through that empty eternity of time, as the remnants of the comrades of his bullying days took on more and more a kind of corporeal levity, and the grimaces of last pain dried flatter and tighter about the slowly discovered teeth, it must have become less and less possible for his mind to contemplate the idea of the only business that would help—the three or four sudden rushes, the lifts and powerful heaves with his eyes tight shut, the bumps on the rail, the faint splashes in the sea. . . .

Now in the crowded noon, sustained as on a pediment by the shuffle and whisper of adulation that came up over the quayward side, he seemed to give the lie to these speculations. He was magnificent, superb. If ever I saw a man drunk with the lordship of his own soul I would have said (then) that it was that shining black Afro-Caribbean animal, that huge, sleek, two-legged panther, Tito. His devouring lust to be ashore and en-

gulfed in his rewards was not hidden. He followed me about the deck under obvious protest, with impatience and disdain.

I was under the necessity of scrutinizing the mummies in the scuppers. I performed the duty in a gingerly silence. There were three in all—relics of ordinary seamen, I judged—one a mulatto, one a Scandinavian perhaps, shot badly through the abdomen; one a Jap.

"Well, Tito, is that all?"

He stood with his arms akimbo, his black fists on his hips.

"I understand," I went on, "that Captain Erd was also killed."

He continued in the same pose of preoccupied disdain. But there had come the ghost of a shift in his eyes. Perhaps it impressed me more than was warranted; from that moment, however, I was not able to shake off a sense of something, somewhere, obscurely amiss.

"I say, Tito, look up, will you? What's happened to Captain—to the body of—Captain Erd? Still on the bridge, eh?"

"See in the fohwahd house, suh." He kept his eyes down.

The forward superstructure of the *Rose of England* stood up two decks from the main; above, the chart room and the bridge; below, the captain's quarters—his stateroom forward in the round bay under the bridge, reached only through the large cabin abaft of it, where he had his desk, his lounge,

coffee-machine, and so on, and into which the door from the outer deck gave entrance.

I had known Captain Erd in life; only for a week, it is true, but in that week with something approaching intimacy; at least with a certain bantering, holiday gaiety of intercourse. I remembered him as a heavy-set, auburn-bearded, blue-eyed Cornishman, pleased with simple things, eating and laughing well. That made it a dozen times worse for me. . . .

He sat in an armchair near the door in the forward bulkhead leading to his state-room. The door was shut, so that its white-painted panels behind his back thrust him out at us in strong silhouette. There he sat, bolt upright, staring at our intrusion with his distended, lusterless eyeballs. He seemed to drone, but that was flies. The only sign of his wound was an untidy blackness on the breast of his jacket, and even that was half hidden by the dull red mat of his beard. In one hand, brown as a Mocha glove, there lay three-quarters of a ship's biscuit, and there were crumbs on his fallen lower lip and on his beard. The refraction of sunlight, pouring in across the floor, picked out the last detail of that inexplicable and horrid suspension of the act of taking food. . . .

I wheeled on Tito and found him a dozen feet away by the rail. My voice snapped out, appallingly public in that hush:

"What the devil? He was killed on the bridge ——?"

The black fellow bolted. I caught him in the ship's waist. It was too bad of me to spoil the magnificent gesture of his return, but I was puzzled and I was mad.

"See here, my man ——"

He lashed out at me in whining protest. "Look at me, suh! Haven't I bring this steamship in from the ocean? Alone? No man else can't do that. That's enough. Now I'm all tiahed out. I wish to go ashoah now. Let me go!" His gesticulations grew more gigantic and uncertain above me. "I wish to go ashoah. I say I've been a long time at sea. I wish to have a drink of rum. I wish to have a friend. I wish to foahget I'm tiahed out. I'm not youah man, suh. I'm a better man 'n you ah, suh. I've bring in the *Rose of England* alone ——"

He had shaken off my grip. With the soundless and ponderous agility of an ape he parted the guarders at the rail. He came to his own with an enormous leap and was swallowed up in the black gulf of their welcome. Swallowed up! Borne away in the dark tide! Nectar and ambrosia; shadowy joys, unutterable rewards, barbaric anodynes!

It was a problem in irony. The cable wires of the world were gorged with his name and deed (I had no doubt); in a way we should all have been proffering him wine in golden goblets and waving peacock fans. Yet he was a beast and he made me sick, and there was nothing for it but to

go and fish him out again from the blandishing gulf and keep him ruthless company till I knew the things I had to know.

The market square was already almost empty. Bostwick, the fat proprietor of Two-in-the-Bush, beckoned me from a window.

"Wanted at the 'phone. . . . Yes, you. From the hospital."

Merciful Heavens! I had completely forgotten Greaves.

It was not his voice over the wire, but, I judged, one of the hospital orderlies. His tone betrayed the man's sense of playing a bit of the fool.

"Beg pardon, sir, but Greaves wishes me to ask you to tell him it's a lie. Those are his words, sir."

"Lie? About the *Rose of England?*"

"Not so much, that, sir, as—— Please wait and I'll ask him again. . . . He says it's about the person named *Tito*. That it was *not Tito*. You're to say definitely *that it was not Tito.*"

I could have slapped Greaves. If there's one thing worse than a drunkard's burbling, it's a sick man's babbling.

"Tell him for God's sake to go to sleep!"

Why couldn't he mind his own business? His mystery-making was unreasonable and pointless, but it had succeeded in doing me no good. It was just one more thing. For the first time I was aware of a tremor of uneasiness as I stood in the doorway of St. John the Apostle Hall and told Tito to come out.

It's not the wisest thing to prod even the mildest of animals in the mating season. And Tito was not the mildest.

It was a child's mind of a peculiarly obnoxious bent, sulky, galled by restraint, secretive and boastful by turns, by turns cold with some inscrutable anxiety and warm with wild lusts of expectancy. And moment by moment, first and last, it revolved gigantic outbreaks of rebellion and deliverance. That was Tito's mind, and for all the will and perspiration spent that afternoon I never had more than a corner of it to work with.

. . . No, he had no idea why the *Rose of England* had not been sunk. To my hypotheses—that there might have been another ship heaving in view—that the thing might have had something to do with sudden wireless news of the armistice—that this or that—to them all he would give me only an abstracted, "I can't rightly say, suh." All he knew was that when the order came to lower the boats away he had "thought it out" (*sic*) and decided that anything was better than taking chances with the Hun—"Them hell devils, you can't rightly say what they'll do to you, suh"—and he had retired into the forecastle, got in his bunk, wrapped the blanket about his head, and remained there (praying, I presume) till some hours after the thud of the last shot. Then, "walking out on deck" (*sic*), he had found the ship afloat and the sea deserted.

You must not imagine that this information emerged in a lump, as written down. So much is the grist of perhaps four hours of cross-examination. My mountainous laborings brought forth mice.

The sun-parlor, where I had led him in face of Bostwick's scandalized protest, wouldn't do. Before the panes lay too much of the square exposed, too many awning-shadows and street-mouths full of eyes. That dusky patience beleaguered us. Inexorably, in the very middle of a fragment of speech, Tito's attention had slipped my grasp; he seemed to grow more distraught, more glossy and vital, more unpleasantly resplendent. . . . No, certainly, the sun-parlor would not do.

As the sun declined and the square below became a purple pool of dusk peopled with a bolder allurement, I had to decide upon some shift. I had gained something from Tito, it is true; enough to fill out the body of a formal report to the House. But in another, a queerer and more pressing way, I had gained precisely nothing at all. There was a question I wanted Tito to answer. The strange thing about that question was that I hadn't the slightest notion what it was. It remained shapeless and unnamable, a shade lurking just beyond the finger-tips of my mind. It had in it elements. It had the corpse of Captain Erd sitting in a buzz of flies in his cabin with a biscuit in his hand and crumbs on his beard. It had in it Greaves's life-and-death imbecilities over the 'phone. It struck

root deeper back in memory to other acts and words:

"How did Tito take it?"

"What do you mean by *that?"*—And the graying knuckles and the abrupt scrutiny of his eyes, as if the name of Tito had struck him in a profound and shocking way. . . . Why?

To save me, I couldn't get hold of that "Why?" But it made me just the least bit sick at my stomach, all the same. . . .

"Tito," I said, "there are only one or two more points. I want you to come aboard with me for a moment or so."

"Aboahd?" He was on his feet. An enormous violence of panic seemed to throw him about. "I say, suh, but I'm not youah man. Haven't I done enough? No, suh, you got no legality to keep me. I salvage the *Rose of England*—me—one man alone. Do you thank me? No, you try and make me a run-and-fetch man foah you. No, suh; I'm my own mastah. I got engagements. I don't wish to go aboahd to-night. You got no legality. . . ."

The forensics sat clumsily on his mysterious but unmistakable terror of returning to that ship, now he was once clear of her.

"No!" His voice increased in violence. "No, no, no!"

I had succeeded in winning him then to the lesser of two evils. He followed me docilely to the floor above, where Bostwick, grudging but impressed, gave me a room. Still contemplating that fearful,

narrowly escaped alternative, he took the chair I placed for him, facing the window, but far enough back so that the square beneath was hidden and only the rail and superstructure of the *Rose of England* beyond it showing, like a painting on a stage-drop in the failing light.

I settled myself. I informed him with quiet resolution "what was up."

His little eyes came to me. He pulled himself together. Given time to think, a bit of that aura of the epical hero crept back about him.

"I told you the truth, suh. What moah you wish?"

There he had me. What more, indeed, did I wish? In the silence that filled that cardboard box of a room, touched from without by the tiny sounds of the town and the inn itself—laughter, rustle of palm fronds, faint tinkling of crockery—in the silence I began to suspect that I was looking just a little the fool. I struck out at random:

"How did Captain Erd get down there, from the bridge?"

There was a perceptible pause. The dusk was so heavy now in the room that I couldn't see the expression on his face.

"I can't rightly say that, suh."

"What have you ever done to the first officer, Mr. Greaves, Tito?"

"Mistah Greaves? Mistah *Greaves,* suh?"

His mystification was so patent that I felt sillier than ever. The oppressive silence returned. Once

more the shapeless question had eluded the finger tips of my mind. The light of a crescent, descending moon grew in the sky and, falling through the window in a ghostly parallelogram, encompassed the big, gray, bare feet of the negro.

I was at the end of my rope. . . .

There was the sound of a latch clicking, the door opened, and Greaves stepped into the room. In the light cast about him from the hallway for an instant I saw him, and Tito, his head twisted awkwardly over his shoulder, saw him, too. Greaves, the daft one, the wisp of hospital meat, the paper-covered skeleton. The man was grotesque. He had on a pair of soldier breeches over his pajamas, and a raincoat draped his peaked shoulders. His feet flapped in straw slippers. His uncovered hair was a straw-cock; his eyes were large, round, whitish, and rimmed with membranous pink.

He said nothing at all. But as the door clicked to, plunging us all again in gloom, Tito's lips gave issue to such a bleat as I had never heard and never care to hear again. It was the sort of thing that runs up a man's spine. It continued. It hung immensely high pitched, small, disembodied in the shadows. It was shocking and unsettling, out of that mass of puissant flesh.

The explanation struck my mind. With this and that and the other thing, not one of us had thought to tell the negro of the first officer's escape, his return, his actual presence in this island, now.

I opened my lips to plunge into explanation. It would be a relief. The situation was too much. On the one hand that bleat, dying off in gasps like a jackass's plaint, and the vision of those two ape-like great toes sticking straight up in the moon patch on the floor; on the other, that fellow Greaves sneaking into the corner behind my chair, mad with fever, escaped from hospital who knows how, thrusting in upon us, making a splendid mess of things altogether. I could have shaken both of them.

I say, I opened my lips. Then I closed them. I waited. Behind me I heard the febrile breathing of the watcher. That was all. It became intolerable. Presently I should have screamed.

But at last Greaves spoke, his voice glaucous, implacable, stupid:

"Tito, were you alone on board that ship?"

In the faint upflare from the light spot I perceived just the two whites of the black man's eyes fixed on me, desperately. It is a fatal thing for a man to look at a ghost.

"Tito," it came again, *"were you alone?"*

I saw a glint of teeth as Tito's lips stirred in a whisper, imploring *me.*

"Foah the sake of Christ Lawd, Mistah Canby!"

"Tito, were you alone?"

It was like a hammer—successive, dull, monotonous blows falling out of the dark. The implacable iteration began to beat in my brain. What

was the fevered fellow driving at? What? I became aware that there was sweat on my temples.

"Tito, were you alone?"

I knew! I saw! In one black flash I saw what Greaves was driving at—what from the very first of those first days his sick imaginings had been clutching to him and alternately pushing away. . . . The unspeakable thing. . . . Nausea was in me. . . . A rebellion of protest! . . . It was an act of sacrilege against the divinity of thought. I wanted to burst out against Greaves, to hush him up, to wring his crazed neck. . . . I saw pictures. I saw the tiny picture of a gray-eyed, warm-haired woman standing in a light filtered down through fronds. I saw the picture of a steamer rolling dead and remote and forgotten of God on the naked desert of a sea. . . .

I tried to get away from that negro, but now, as if it had become in reality a nightmare, I saw him swelling in sight, obtruding hugely out of the dark, falling upon me with the wide, moist, grasping tentacles of his hands. He occupied the moonlight at my knees. He smothered my struggles. He clung to me and breathed his breath in my face.

"No, suh, Mistah Canby; foah the sake of Christ Lawd I'll tell you the truth. No, suh, I was not alone on that ship."

My wrists endured the sucking of his palms. I held my voice level:

"Who was with you on that ship, Tito?"

"The captain, suh."

"But the captain was dead, Tito, like the others."

"Dead? Of couhse he was dead, suh. Can't I see him shrivelin' away one day aftah anotheh? Can't I smell him? . . . But tell me this, suh, how can a dead man come walkin' down the laddah from the bridge, suh? How can he open the doah to his cabin, suh? How can he stand theah inside the doah waitin' foah Tito ——?"

"Come!" I shook him again. "Look at me and talk sense!"

But his butter-plate eyes had strayed to the left of mine, and there, over my shoulder, I felt Greaves's hot face hanging and waiting.

"If you've anything to tell me," I expostulated, "start at the beginning and tell it straight. Sit back in that chair first; look out of the window, and don't be a damned fool."

For some reason he obeyed. He got his eyes away from the ghost of Greaves and stared out at the *Rose of England's* upper works, riding motionless in the oblique, silvery flood.

"Tell it straight, Tito. What happened first?"

"Fuhst? Fuhst thing of all he jumps out at me."

"Go slow!"

"Yes, suh. Look heah, suh. That's the vehy fuhst mohning aftah. I come on deck from the fo'c'sle, wheah I been all night. I don't like them cohpses, so I stay inside the fo'c'sle in the night time. I come out. I think to myself I'd like to know wheah in the ocean I am. The captain he

always put a line on the chaht. Only I don't like to go up on the bridge because he's lyin' theah. I think maybe he got the chaht in his cabin below. So I go theah and I open the doah. Then, suh, he is theah, waitin' behind that doah. Some time in the night he's come down from the bridge. When I pull that doah open he falls out on top of me, wavin' his ahms. He nevah say nothin', because he's dead and stiff and the blood dry on his jacket and his mouth open. He just wait theah and fall out on Tito. . . ."

"What did you do then, Tito?"

"I went back fohwahds and got into my bunk and stayed theah three days till I got too thuhsty."

"What did you do then, when you got too thirsty, Tito?"

"I got to the galley, suh."

"To get to the galley, aft, you had to pass the captain's cabin?"

I was consciously and elaborately holding him up, like a witness at the bar.

"Yes, suh."

"Was Captain Erd still lying where he had 'jumped out' at you?"

"No, suh. But the doah was still open and I seen him theah."

"Where, Tito?"

"Wheah you seen him youahself, suh, sittin' in that chaih with his back to that stateroom doah inside, staihin' at me with his eyes wide open."

"Yes, Tito. Now, one thing. Did the cap-

tain have in his hand, at that time, the bit of biscuit ——"

"No, suh. Oh no, suh. That come lateh on ——"

"Just when?"

"That must have been a week lateh, maybe moah, suh. I was in the galley evehy day, you undehstand that, suh. Well, suh, one day it seemed to me I miss some food. I know that food, suh; I count evehy tin. I know that watah, evehy inch. I find two tin of biscuit open and some watah gone, too. Suh, you can't undehstand. You nevah been all alone on a steamship out in the ocean—night and day—day and night—with the cohpses of men."

"What did you do then, Tito?"

"Deah Lawd, suh, I feel as if things grab at me behind my back in that galley—evehy minute. I'm all alone, but yet, suh, I can't stuhh hand noah foot out of that galley. It's wuhse about that food than it was even about him jumpin' out on me. Say theah could be a dead man walk! But no suh, theah ain't no dead man wants to eat. What good it do him? Tell me that, suh!"

"Yes, Tito. And then? You stayed in the galley?"

"Yes, suh, I stay theah in the galley. It come on dahk. It come on moonlight—big, full moon. I have a big drink of rum—and anothah big drink. It come on late. Then I heah him—pat-pat-pat on deck—light-foot ——"

"*Heard* him? You actually mean to say ——"

"Oh, suh, I heah that cohpse plenty times on a calm night, prowlin' and prowlin'. . . . Now I heah him, and he's comin' towahds the galley. What's Tito to do? I jump out of that galley and I see him, just a shadow creepin' along in the shade of the fohwahd house. I give one yell, suh. Then he stop. Then he give one daht back and I heah him slam that cabin doah to behind him. Then I'm crazy. I'm crazy, suh!"

Crazy, indeed. Now that dark narrator, lost wholly in the past, made the thing live. His gestures were powerful; his strong legs held him a little clear of the chair seat; his eyes were fixed and rapt upon the faintly luminous deck hanging in the night beyond the square. He would have been surprised to know that, sentence by sentence, he was delivering himself from death.

"I'm crazy, suh. I think to myself. What the hell, Tito! A man got to do somethin'. It come to that. I go back and get anothah big drink and I come out on deck. I see old Swanson lyin' there in the scuppers. I give him a kick in the chest. I'm crazy. I go and walk to that cabin doah. I look at it. Then all of a sudden I think to myself: See heah, Tito, theah ain't no cohpse wants to eat. Somebody is playin' tricks with Tito. I'm crazy. I think to myself: Tito, you go right through that place, stateroom and all. You fling that cohpse ovehboahd and be done with it. With that rum I can do anything. I pull that doah open. I mahch

into that cabin. I tuhn on the electric light. And theah sit that cohpse staihin' at me, and foah deah God sake he been eatin' biscuit suah 'nough! Yes, suh, I see crumbs left on his whiskah. He got a piece left in his hand. Eatin'! . . . Foah God sake! . . . I back out of that doah and I slam it good, like a cannon bang. And I nevah, nevah, nevah goin' to open that doah again. . . ."

The actuality of his rout at the hands of that imperturbable biscuit-feaster was too near. He had heaped down in his chair.

"Nevah, nevah!" he breathed.

"Tito," I pulled him up, "was that the last you had from him?"

"I nevah go near him again . . ."

"But did you ever *hear* him ——"

"Oh yes, I *heah* him all right, suh. Come a calm night I heah him prowlin', prowlin'. Light-foot! He don't weigh so much now, that cohpse don't. Pat-pat-pat. Oh, deah Lawd, suh! Light-foot!"

And of a sudden, in the close gloom, with the weight of his outthrust chest and shoulders coming against my back, Greaves found a voice.

"Tito, how long has it been now since you heard it last?"

Tito's eyes jerked to the half-forgotten, ghostly questioner.

"I—I can't rightly —— Two nights—maybe five nights ——"

"Heaven send!" I heard the prayer buried in Greaves's windpipe, and straightway he was clam-

bering and stumbling for the door. The burst of light showed him in grotesque outrush, flapping, a flitter-gibbet of fever and haste.

Making the best pursuit I could, it was with difficulty I caught him almost across the square to the quay-side. The moon was going down. It was dark there, like a pond-bottom. His face loomed gray and set. "Hurry!" was all he said.

No one was at the gang-plank of the *Rose of England;* the guarders had slipped off to better company than the corpses still lying in the scuppers for the eye of that magistrate not yet located in the west of the islands.

Greaves threw open the cabin door and turned the electric switch inside. But the batteries must have long ago gone dead.

"Have you a match, Canby?"

I handed him one. The little flare illuminated the interior. Captain Erd stared at us from his chair, and again he seemed to drone. It was all precisely as it had been, even to the remains of that unwholesome feast—even to the stateroom door standing like a white mat in a frame behind him.

Like Tito on that other moonlit night of crisis, Greaves was "crazy" now. He was striding toward that door when the match went out; in the darkness I heard the guarding chair thrust aside, the soft impact of that exemplary "watcher by the threshold" tumbling down, and the opening of the door.

Things pulled me two ways—inward—out on deck. I was out on deck when Greaves re-emerged, bearing Mary Erd wrapped in a merchant captain's greatcoat in his arms. It was preposterous for him to think he could carry even her, for he had no flesh or sinew on him, and his knees bent in. But when I put out my hands for that bundle the fierceness of his face drove me off.

He didn't seem to know what to do, where to go, how to act. I was almost as bad. In face of the gigantic mysteriousness of things we stood there and talked in calm voices.

"You were afraid of this from the very beginning," I said.

"Yes. I told you the 'chief' thought she must be in Croode's boat. What I didn't tell you was that I spoke Croode's boat ten minutes after that, myself. . . ."

There we stood, like two gawks.

"Good Heavens alive, man!" I broke out.

The tottering idiot thought again that I was going to rob him. He swayed off as fast as he could along the deck. As I caught up I saw Mary Erd's eyes open and rest on the ear and fever-crinkled cheek of her bearer. I heard a whisper hovering over her lips:

"Edward Greaves. . . . Edward!"

He battled to keep up. On my word, he was like a tippler trying to fool a policeman.

"Edward—is—is everything all right? You're here? You won't let any—anything ——?"

He sucked at his paper cheeks.

"I'm tired, Edward. I've been frightened. And I've had to do awful things—awful things. I've played tricks with the—the dead."

And there went the blighted, transfigured fool, puffing and teetering down the plank toward Two-in-the-Bush—a skeleton bearing a skeleton in his arms and muttering, "Yes, Mary; Mary, yes ——" in a silly way.

I was the one fit one among the three, and I was the one to lag. As I lagged, midway of the market-square, where the measures of a "fox-trot" came down faintly from the yellow windows on the hill, my eye caught the shadow of a creature of the night, making off, not unaccompanied, into the velvet cavern of a by-street. That was Tito, conqueror of the sea. . . .

THE ANGLO-SAXON

WE had been trying to wear out the Newfoundland fog in a corner of the smoking saloon, the Doctor, the Tinsmith, the Yankee Consul, and I; and the talk had got to grips somehow with the old argument of heredity *versus* environment in the shaping of a human career. The Doctor (to my surprise) held for environment; the Tinsmith (as unexpectedly) for the blood. Before I had had a chance to air my convictions the Yankee Consul took the word.

"There's a certain fellow I'm thinking of, and I've no doubt you've all known him more or less, here and there. This fellow is a Britisher—abovedecks an Englishman, belowdecks a Scot. You know him: the kind that takes to the sea, and always has, and gobbled up the globe in the process—gray-sandy-red-headed, thin-beaked, moderate-spoken, worshiping the god and the marmalade of the street where he was born and thoroughly proper to his deathbed about his nails and his tea and his king. That's the man! Well, gentlemen, if there's one man in the world you'd bank on to hang to the habits and morals his father gave him —hang like grim disaster, Equator or Pole—if there's one, gentlemen, I think you'll agree I've described him."

The Doctor nodded and so did I. I know the breed. The Consul knocked out his pipe and told this tale.

When I first went out in the service (and that was a good many years ago) it was to take the broom-and-waste-basket job in our consulate at Tunis on the Barbary Coast. At Liverpool, where I'd expected to catch a steamer for Marseille, I was offered a quicker and cheaper chance on a cargo boat leaving direct for Tunis on the following tide.

It was my first trip on a British merchantman, but it wasn't my last; I'll take the opportunity to-day when it's offered me. My stateroom off the cabin was larger and cleaner than I should have found on a P. & O., at my price; the food was plain, but plenty and good; the table talk (I messed with the ship's five officers) was as full of meat as I've ever found it at the captain's table in a Cunarder—and a good sight fuller, let me say.

In each of those five men, from the second engineer up to the captain, I found something to take my interest or my liking. It's the captain, though, that I'm going to talk about. He is the "hero" of the tale.

He was young; I'd hate to say how young, for they're deceiving. Young enough, anyhow; even though it was his first voyage with master's papers (as it was also his first trip east in any capacity in

any ship). Young enough, at any rate, to make an American college graduate wonder.

His name was Abel Diplo. I've already described him. He didn't *conform* to the type; he *was* it. I'll ask you to mark that well.

I said "interest or liking." It was my interest Diplo took, partly because the breed was new to me, and partly because, at first, he didn't appeal to the other thing. In the breed there are subbreeds; there are, naturally enough, Covenanters and Cavaliers. Diplo was the Covenanter. Character! there you had him. He was not a "gentleman." Eating once a day, going to night class, keeping his collars clean and shaving close—that was what had brought him to where he was, and at an age that would have made a "gentleman's" son turn green. Rock-ribbed, cold-blooded, Anglo-Saxon do-it-or-die! You'll begin to see why I say that at first he didn't much appeal to the other thing.

"You must have come down pretty straight from the Ironsides," I took him up one night. It was a moonlight night off the coast of Spain and we were lounging after dinner on the bridge.

"I?" said he. He gave me a queer look.

"Well, I was just thinking—you don't seem to have any of the vices. Now this very business of turning down your glass at table ——"

"Do you know why I do that, Mr. Gore? Will you have a look down there, on the forecastle head. That's why! *That* sort of thing!"

I looked and saw what he was pointing at, the ship's two "characters," Old Perce and Happy Days, both of them deep in the bottle again. I knew them well by this time. They infested the decks; "infested" is the only word. I had wondered more than once how any self-respecting commander could have held his hand from dumping them both overboard the first day out.

They were as alike as they were inseparable, equally dirty, equally insolent, equally drunk. The only way you could tell them apart was that Happy Days had rings in his ears—funny old copper rings with jade beads. Happy Days was what a hard life had left of an old black bobtailed monkey. Old Perce was what the same had left of a sailorman. I can still see them there, huddled in the moonlight on the forecastle head, digesting their tipple in private, dreaming their dreams, scheming their schemes—two wrinkled, rum-soaked castaways.

"*That* sort of thing!" repeated Diplo. He sounded angry. "I am young, sir; I have only myself to depend upon; I can see the work of drink. That man down there, sir, once commanded a brig. Not much of a craft, perhaps—matter of a hundred tons or so, in the Mediterranean trade —but his own. And now look at him! Old Perce! The lowest, the wickedest man in the world. Imagine! He has a son, a friend of mine back there in Liverpool (else he wouldn't be in this vessel, make sure of that). That son, by his own

will and work, is beginning to do well. Now, sir, can you fancy a man being jealous of the success of his own son? Meanly jealous, drunkenly, cursingly jealous? . . . No, Mr. Gore, if you talk to me of table beer, all I can say to you is—'Old Perce'!"

Now, gentlemen, you can admire St. George to almost any extent, and even pay well for a seat at the dragon fight—as a spectacle. But when it comes to an after-dinner cigar or a story to swap, you'd probably do as I did after that and pick on the second officer or one of the engineers. And so I suppose I should have gone on to this day remembering Diplo (if at all) as a kind of unbudgable, undintable, all-self-sufficient brand of Cromwell in a suit of armor, if I hadn't happened by the sheerest accident one night to discover that the armor wasn't Diplo at all.

This was how it was. I'd been noticing, anyway, for perhaps the last third of the voyage, that Diplo wasn't looking quite up to snuff. Nothing to wonder at, seeing it was his first command, and, still more, his first trip to African waters at all. I put it down to that, I suppose, and still should do so, if it hadn't been for that sheerest chance.

It was the evening of the night when we were looking to make our landfall off the Tunis Gulf, just turning dark, I remember, and I was taking a prowl around the deck for my digestion, when I happened to come on Diplo, tucked out of the way

behind a lifeboat amidships, and being actively and violently sick as a dog over the side. Seasick, I give you my oath! And the water as smooth as a pond of oil. And the captain of the ship!

Well, I stopped. Who wouldn't? I suppose I looked like an idiot, poking my head around the boat's stem. He saw me, and I couldn't tell from his suffering eyes whether he wanted to lay his head on my shoulder or wring my neck.

"Is there anything," I hemmed and hawed—"anything I can do?"

He didn't answer. He got himself up and out from behind the boat, and, grabbing hold of my wrist (to my dumfoundment), he dragged me, literally dragged me, to his cabin under the bridge. He shut the door tight, pulled the hanging over the port, sat down on his bunk in the dark, and shook. Shook!

"Good Land of Liberty!" said I. "What's up?"

Never a word. In another wink he was on his feet, grabbing the door open again, rushing out. I went out, too, to go on with my constitutional; but it wouldn't do. He had me going. After one round I turned up the ladder to the bridge. I found him standing out in the starboard wing, taut as a wire, his hands grabbed behind him, his eyes on the horizon beyond the bows. Scared! Scared, I thought to myself, to his shame, of making his first port in command. But still I had to give him a chance.

"You didn't tell me, Mr. Diplo——"

"Ah?" You know the tone. The fool was trying to cover up.

"What was wrong?" I finished it out.

"That!" he exploded. He stuck out an arm as long as a bean pole at the shadow line between the sky and the sea. *"That!* That—*Africa!"*

"Yes," I said, after a minute. "Yes, I think I know, now, what you mean. I've had it myself, a little. It's—it's just the kind of feeling of it's not being real—the old romantic pictures coming back from your geography days—and your *Arabian Nights,* eh?—sheiks and pampered mares, remember, and the Sahara and the domes under the palms and the veiled women—those old dreams ——"

The fellow was on me in a flash.

"Did you ever *dream?"*

"Not," said I, taking another look at those pupils of his, "like *that."*

"I'd forgot," I heard him saying to himself. "I'd quite forgot, until the other day at the Straits, I saw the coast, and knew that it was *it."*

"What?"

He gave me a funny, shivery look, and then he put his elbows down on the rail and turned his eyes the other way. It isn't often you'll catch a Puritan peeling off the crust of his immortal soul to anyone below the angels; he didn't want to, but he had to, all the same.

"When I was a lad," he said, "a curious thing happened. I don't know a great deal about it. I only know that I must have been taken to the

theater by some person who ought to have known better, at an age when taking me was a wicked crime. Or perhaps I may have been ill without their knowing it—some little hidden baby fever that made things dazzle a bit too bright. I don't know. I don't even know what the play was about. All I can remember is one scene, and I can remember that as plainly to-night as—as if it *were* to-night. On one side there was a moonlit city wall with half of a vast gate filled with shadow. Before the gate was a square, all white dust in the moonlight. Across it, parallel with my sight, a row of palm trees filed away along a road running as straight as a ruler to the end of the world across a dry, pale plain with little wrinkled hills against the sky. . . . Glue and cardboard and painted canvas? Yes, but how was I to know? How was I to know?

"And the camels—I suppose there were three or four moth-eaten chaps that came out of the wings—but always after I remembered them, in those nights I lay awake or dreamed, coming by hundreds out of that distance down that painted road, grunting and bubbling and stinking, and tinkling their little bells, and groaning down on their knees in the dust. And the hooded men that came with them, the veiled women, the blackamoor thumping a drum under the arch, the ragged old beggar that ran with incense through the crowd—Adelphi supers in muslin, yes, yes—but *how was I to know?*"

He was silent a moment, his chin nested in his hand.

"Yes, I must have been ill when I saw the thing; for always afterward when that nightmare came sneaking to take me I remember the same sensation of discomfort, the same itching, gnawing, wailing wretchedness. It weighed me down with a terror I cannot name—the same terror, I suppose, that any English lad would feel for a thing heathenish, diseased, and unclean. And the worst of that loathing was that I *wanted* the thing. I *wanted* to go—go and creep into that silly scene and lie in the dust under one of those cardboard palms and crinkle my toes and hear the camels grunting, the boom of the black man's drums, the rustling of those outlandish moonlit robes, the gasps of veiled women as I reached out to touch their naked ankles, and all—all! I wanted it, craved it, craved the sweet stink of that incense in my nostrils again—lusted for it! I was so terrified I cried out loud—and all the while I *lusted!*"

He had hold of the rail, trying to twist it off the ship.

"I'd forgot! Till to-night! Till now!" His voice had gone to a whisper. There was sweat on his forehead, and somehow I knew he was nauseated again. "I lusted! I grew. I changed. As I changed the dream changed. I didn't reach up to touch the ankles of those veiled women any longer; they gave me secret signs, and I got up

out of the dust to follow them—every night—in through that vast gate—through that city—into their red-lit rooms—red-lit and secret and heavy with perfumes. I—I—I say, sir, do you make out a flash on the sky line there, almost dead ahead?"

"No," said I, looking where he had pointed.

"Mr. Gore," he went back, "my whole boyhood was a fight against that sickening thing. But I did fight it—till I bled, till I almost died. I fought it and I beat it and it was gone, and I had forgot. . . . I say, that *is* a light. . . . *Mr. Andrews!*"

The first officer was behind us.

"Coming, sir," he said. "Cani Isles Light a half point on the port bow, sir, and five bells struck. We should be in the Gulf by one."

I looked away at the tiny flash (I could see it now that I knew it was there) and then back again at Diplo. He had his fingers over his eyes, his temples pinched between his thumbs.

"I'd forgot!" I heard him saying to himself. "Forgot!"

It particularly wanted diversion, that moment did. Something light. It got it, too, and from a quarter where no one looked—under our very noses, that is to say. It was Perce and the ape, on the forecastle head. The funny old fool had got his carcass balanced on the capstan drum (and not balanced too well, at that) with the monk on his shoulder aloft, and there he swayed in a kind of beery majesty with an oratorical arm ahead.

"Hafrica!" we heard him solemnly pronounc-

ing, *"Hold* Hafrica—'ome of shplendor and delight—*hi* shlute thee!"

It was ridiculous enough; I didn't know, though, whether to laugh or not. I didn't have to wait long to find out.

"Get below!" I heard Diplo roaring. He had his body three feet over the bridge rail and his arm and fist another yard on that, and I wish you could have seen his face. "Get below, you rotten drunkard!" he yelled. "Get out of my sight, you blasphemous, vile drunkard, you! *Go below!"*

It was the finest thing in the world for Diplo; it set him on his feet, clear headed again, captain of his ship and his soul. You would have known it, to hear that *"Go below!"*

But Old Perce didn't go below. He got himself and Happy Days off the forecastle head all right, and fast enough, but it was only to hide out under the bridge. I know, because I was the first that happened to go down, and I was the one to catch it in the neck. He fell on me, literally, and literally, for a moment, I couldn't get away. I batted at his hands, but they'd been batted at before. His gin-pickled dignity had been tampered with; his boozy pride was hurt; he had words to say; he clung; he puffed; he bubbled in my face.

"Called me a drunkard, did 'e? Called me a rotten drunkard, did 'e? Christ blind me if I don't pay 'im out for that! God le'me live till the day hi see 'im get 'isself so bloody drunk 'e can't stand on 'is bleedin' feet! God le'me live! The

pretty toff! The lily-white virgin. The blinkin', bleedin' curate! Wyte! Just you wyte! Wyte till 'is gracious 'ighness gets a taste o' *bokha* into 'is coffee cup! Wyte till 'is prunes-an'-prisms 'as a whiff o' the incense in the striped *souk!* Wyte till 'e see the girls in Bou Kader's shop up there! . . . Called the hold man a drunkard, did 'e! . . . Wyte! . . . *Wyte!*"

"You'd think then that I should have known. But I didn't. I was too blown and rum-steamed and generally contaminated getting clear of him to think of putting as plain a two and as plain a two as that together—not for another twenty hours, at any rate. And in another twenty hours we were all ashore and up to our necks in Islam.

Up to our necks? Over our heads! At least *I* was. I've lived twenty-odd years in Barbary ports, first and last, eleven of them in that same screeching, scratching, jostling, jumbling dress rehearsal of a three-colored moving picture of a highly perfumed circus of a White Tunis, but I've never forgotten that day when I saw it new.

We drifted. There were three of us: Diplo (I'd picked him up at the old sea gate), a fellow named Maynard, from Melrose, Massachusetts, my immediate superior at the consulate, and myself. Maynard was doing the honors of the sights, but, Lord love you! I saw no "sights." All I saw was a daze and a maze of an endless rabbit warren of a bazaar crammed with outlandish creations on two legs or four legs, all colors of the rain-

bow, all stench from filth to hyacinth, all muck and silk and copper and clatter and hullabaloo. I simply followed where I was led, looking like an idiot (I've no doubt) with my eyes bogged out and my mouth open for marvel of it—of it, and of Diplo.

After his panic of the night before he had me guessing to-day. *His* mouth wasn't open, not a bit of it. His stalk was the stalk of the British tourist seasoned by five continents. He said "deucedly amusing," and "not half." He said, "Filthy beggars," of the men, and as for those mysterious "veiled women" he had talked so much about—"Jolly curious, eh?" was all he could say for the slipper-slappers to-day. He carried it off to perfection, with only the least little punky yellow look around the gills, if anyone wanted to look close enough for that.

Even when we came into that old arched-over vault of the perfume sellers' *souk*. I guess I must have loafed away a good many more than a hundred afternoons in that place since, and if there's any Christian honesty left in me, it's by luck and the grace of God. For if there's a spot for a man to sit on his spine and dream his soul sweetly down the rosy road to hell, it's that spot there. It's always in a sort of twilight, like a cathedral, and along the striped walls the merchants sit cross-legged in their niches like idols in ivory with their tapers and crystals of attars and essences hung around. And the air is soaked and drugged: musk

and amber, chypre and hyacinth for the *harem;* incense and myrrh and wax tapers for the mosque. I tell you it's like music—one full, rich, drowsy, voluptuous tone—one chord of piety and lust.

God and flesh in a perfume. Pretty thought, eh? Well, I had it. I got it through my nose. And standing there, I had one of those flashes that come sometimes. "Why," said I—"why—*this* is *Diplo!*" And then in still another flash, I remembered the old tippler's word about the "whiff of incense in the striped *souk.*"

I gave Diplo a studying look out of the corner of an eye. His face was a mask: that is to say, it looked as natural as life; he had his hands in his pockets and his cap raked back.

"What do you make of it, Captain?"

"Jolly picturesque!" He slid his tongue along his lip. "Jolly!"

That's all the jolt I got out of that. Another was on the way, though. I know now that Old Perce had been following us all along, but none of us knew it then, and when he came bursting out of the bed-auction crowd at the upper end of the *souk,* rolling like a tub in a seaway, crimson, gorgeous, eyes cocked, arms akimbo, monk aloft, it was jolt enough, I say.

None of us noticed him, of course; we all stood perfectly still, all praying to luck and liquor to carry him by. It was a near thing. One close-hauled tack was bringing him dead on top of us, when another lurch and gybe brought him clear

and sent him caroming against the legs of a couple of Arab gentlemen across the way.

They were really gentlemen, you know; fine old silk-and-ivory aristocrats of the True Faith, standing there innocently, hand in hand.

There was nothing violent. They merely withdrew their skirts a little from the contamination, and one of them said three words.

Maynard grinned. "Pig, he called him. 'Pig and father of a pig!' "

I wish you could have seen Diplo's face.

"What?" he gasped. *"What?"* he choked.

"That's right: '*Hallouf-bou-hallouf*'—'Pig-father-pig'! Serves him right, too; darn well right. By the way, Captain, if he's one of yours ——"

He never finished. The old Arab had just put the only logical period at the end of his epithet; laying aside his cheek cloth, he spit calmly and truly in the sailor's face.

Maynard saw Diplo before I did and got hold of his arm, and he told me afterward it was lucky he did. I turned just in time to see the man's eyes. And it was in that wink that the lightning struck me.

"Lord! Lord!" was all I could think. "Lord! how awful! He's the old beast's son himself. Oh, Lord!"

It was only a wink. Diplo did get control of those give-away eyes; he did succeed, that time, in crawling to cover again. Turning on Old Perce, "Get back to the ship!" said he in a tone like a

knife, and, giving us all his back, he walked away.

Naturally we followed him, Maynard and I, leaving the old sinner to "get back to the ship"—which you may be sure he didn't do. He was behind us again before we'd gone a hundred yards: I couldn't see him, but I could see Happy Days all right, riding over the heads of the crowd. . . . You'll admit the thing had its elements. I couldn't help seeing it back in a mediæval show booth: Good Son, still stanch, tracked by Bad Father, still hopeful, through the Gardens of Strange Delight.

Well, as I say, we followed Diplo. We caught up with him. Maynard started in conscientiously to point out more "sights," but he didn't get on very far with that. Very soon I saw him rubbing his chin.

"Gore," said he, holding me back a little, "what's the matter with this man, Diplo? Anything?"

"Not so far as I know," said I.

"H'mmm!" said he.

We walked on behind him, and we had to walk, too; that tourist stalk of his was gone now and he was eating up the ground in straight lines and mathematical corners like a somnambulist in a hurry to reach the edge of the roof. Chin up, cap down, eyes dead ahead—going nowhere. It's no wonder that Maynard, who was supposed to be running the party, began to feel a bit up in the air.

After a little more of it he suddenly doubled around and got in front of us.

"Look here," said he, "I guess that's about a day as far as sights go. It's getting dark, anyway, and they're beginning to shut up the *souk!* In another quarter of an hour it 'll be dead as door nails here inside the wall. Eh, Captain?"

"Quite right," said Diplo. He stood there as tall as a steeple.

"Well, let's get on out to Frenchtown, then." Maynard took my arm and started cheerily. Then he stopped. "Coming, Captain?"

There was Diplo, stock where we'd left him, covering a yawn.

"Carry along, you two," he called. "I think I'll have just a bit of another turn about, if you don't mind."

"But Captain," Maynard argued, "take my word there's nothing to see from now on. And besides, you'd get lost at the first turn."

"*IF* you don't mind!"

It was the voice of the mule. Diplo touched his cap with a deadly politeness, wheeled, struck out stiff-legged as a crane, doubled around the nearest alley-turning and disappeared.

Maynard was mystified. He was also good and mad.

"That makes me tired, Gore. Do you know," said he, "what I've a damned good mind to do? . . . But no. I don't want the responsibility. It's not too safe in here after dark, and he'd be lost

after two twists. Come on; we've got to find him."

We went on all right, but we didn't find him. We went at a trot after a minute or so, and we kept trotting, in and out and round about through that kennel of a labyrinth. It was dark now and as dead as Maynard had said—as dead as the tomb. I perspired; Maynard perspired worse.

"Look here!" he protested at last, pulling me up. "You brought this fellow along. Tell me what's the matter with him, so I'll know what to do. Is he crazy or is he drunk?"

"He never drinks," said I.

"Doesn't, eh? H'mmm!" He turned his head sharply. "Well, there's somebody that *does*." He pulled me a step out of the way of an elephantine shadow that came rocking down one cross run and rolling away up another, Old Perce with the ape up and a gorgeous slant on (and not a quarter as drunk, I began to suspect, as he made out to be).

"Follow him!" said I, making a guess, "and I bet we find our man."

Then I was almost sorry. Maynard gave me a suspicious jerk of the eye and opened his mouth. But then he shut it again and pounded along.

My guess was a bright one. We hadn't turned three corners when we were almost in collision with Diplo himself, standing as straight and as still as a fence post before the wall of a house that had a lantern lighted over the door. Old Perce had passed him and brought up nearer the door,

and he was standing with his head cocked too, listening.

I had to ask Maynard under my breath what it was all about.

"Fête of some kind—wedding or circumcision or what not. Hear the music in there? Hear the women yodelling, back there? Wedding, probably."

Old Perce thought so too. He turned his head and wagged it at the wooden man before us.

"Hit's a weddin', hold son. Blighted Harab weddin'. Nothin' 'olier than a weddin', his there, my 'oly lad? Come along in!" And, with that, he crooked the arm of invitation, for all the world like an old stager "taking in" the latest "bud."

Diplo didn't hit him. But he surprised me even more than that. He stuck out one wooden hand, put it on the old man's arm, marched along with him to that open door and marched inside.

Maynard got to that door in about three jumps, and I wasn't far behind him, scared good and witless by the way he stretched his neck out to see into the hole over the heads that it was full of. But then I heard him breathe again.

"Well, I guess it's all right, Gore. I know this man—he's a courier at the Dutch consulate—and he knows me. In we go!"

We picked our way through a dense odor in a kind of entry-way and came out into a square court roofed with a striped awning, and so full of light that it dazzled after the dark. A dazzle and a

daze. All I knew for the first while was that an Arab man with round whiskers (that was Si Mahmud, our host: he shifted to our shop later on and I came to know him well) cleared out a place for Maynard and me on one of the foremost benches and put a cup of coffee in my hand.

Have any of you ever looked in on an Arab's wedding carouse? If you have you'll know. They're all pretty much the same; same sardine pack of males in coats of many colors and red *chechias* tipping farther and farther over their ears as the evening grows; same bridegroom, painted like a harlot, seated by the same mysterious door; same plank rostrum in the court; same gang of hashish-lighted musicians, funny fiddles, *taboukas,* melodions, flutes; same fat white dancing girls, twisting and clanking and sweating through the same unvarying dance (the dance, by the way, most sumptuously and brazenly symbolical of the particular occasion); same drugged air full of staling perfumes, cigarette smoke, sickly syrups, syrupy coffee—such as I still held grabbed in my hand.

"You've got to taste it, anyhow," Maynard warned in my ear.

It was burnt and sticky, but down it went.

"I thought," he went on, "that you said your friend didn't drink."

"He doesn't. Where is he?"

Maynard pointed him out, plain enough, sitting chums with Old Perce in the forepart of the

benches opposite. He had a little tumbler in his fist.

"But that looks like water," I protested.

"So does gin. But gin's a baby to that stuff, *bokha,* there."

"I always thought, somehow, that Mohammedans were forbidden ——"

"Ho, ho! So are Christians too. Ha, ha! . . . That's the Captain's second round of that fig juice, and if he's not used to liquor, Lord help him before long."

"Lord help him already!" was what came to me. It showed in his eyes. They were taking on a stare, a kind of a ground-glass stare, that picked out one thing and glued on to it and couldn't seem to let go.

I looked to see what it had hold of now—and then I began to understand. It was an Arab on the bench in front of him, a place or so to the left, a youngish fellow in Egyptian fez and London-tailored tweed (they were both coming in then with a certain set of the Moslem dandies) and altogether the air of the man-about-town in New Tunis. But what got me about this fellow, and knocked all my old ideas gally-west (and Diplo's too, I gather) was that this Mohammedan boulevardier was as blond as Abel Diplo himself—just as straw-headed—just as gray-eyed.

I've seen plenty of them since: it's natural enough when you come to think that the Goths and Vandals wiped up this coast along with the

rest of the Roman Empire; but the point was I hadn't then, and Diplo hadn't either.

Well, I know as well as anything what was going through his poor head, already sick enough with that "itching, gnawing, wailing wretchedness," and still farther twisted with that poison of figs—the despair, the fright, the magicking-away of the one last barrier to his old dream: "Here's one of *them,* and God help me! he isn't a blackamoor or a demon or hippogriff at all. He's as like me—he's *so* like me that if I were to change caps with him, there he'd sit an Englishman, and here *I*'d sit ——"

I know. I saw him lean over, all of a sudden, right across the monkey in the old man's lap, pick the fez from that startled dandy's pate and cram it squarely and tightly on his own.

Maynard sat up straight. I felt him.

"That may make trouble." He was watching under his eyelids. "Or again it may not. All according —— Wait! Steady! If they'll only be amused ——"

It was nip and tuck for the minute around the cheeky "Christian dog"; even I could see that. But it was hilarity that won—hilarity of fig and feast. One tittered. Another shook the finger of glee at the *roumi* in a Mohammedan hat. Still another, to pile it on, stripped off his own brown *burnous* and threw it over the shoulders of the infidel. It went even farther than that. A youngster hardly over fifteen had Diplo up on his two feet like a

window image and towing away through the crowd and into a cave-looking place across the court.

"Nothing to worry about there," Maynard told me (I imagine I must have looked uncomfortable). "That's one of the sons of the house. Going to rig your friend out right, probably; that's all."

It was so. Diplo reappeared, prodded and shunted out between the benches by the delighted son; another Diplo, a gorgeous, silk, soft-slippered Diplo, hypnotized with queerness and petrified with drink. Joy broke loose. Hands grabbed at him from all sides. The dancer on the rostrum (a huge white Algerian Jewess she was) caught the spirit of the meeting, turned her batteries on the *roumi,* and danced her dance "at" him alone.

And, gentlemen, if you know what *that* means. Think to yourselves. I said the dance was symbolical. No, *literal! Sumptuously* literal!

Can you imagine Diplo—chapel and night-class Diplo—Diplo of the old dragon fight with a red-lit dream—Diplo, fetched up there, head full of *bokha* and that screeling, boom-thumped, split-tone, heathen tune, silk on his body, hyacinths behind his ears, and his two eyes bulging out to that mocking invitation? Can you imagine?

Well, all of a sudden he started for her. He went slowly, head down between his shoulders, chin out, never a word or sound. . . . It was Old Perce that furnished the music, Old Perce, come to glory at last.

"Carry on, my 'oly hoffspring! Carry on, my virgin lad! Carry on!"

In my other ear I got it from Maynard. "This," said he, "has gone about far enough."

He got out quietly but quickly. He caught the back of Diplo's purple *burnous* just as the crazy fool had got a knee up on the rostrum. I don't know what he said, but I saw the jerk he gave, and I saw the look that Diplo gave him back. . . . Old Perce was throwing the monk in the air: *"Yow! Yow! Yow!"* . . . There was nothing violent. Not in the least. Diplo made up his lips and spit calmly and truly in Maynard's face, that was all.

Then there was a riot. . . . Maynard got to me. He was as white as a dead one, to his lips. "The man's drunk now. I can't touch him now. When he's sobered off he'll fight. *You* will see to that, Gore."

"All right," said I, solemn enough. "But where's he gone now?"

Maynard jumped on a bench at that. He'd got an interest in Diplo now—a personal interest to see that he came through to the day of vengeance alive and whole.

"There!" he yelled. "Out of the door there! Come fast!"

I got behind him. It was football work. Si Mahmud helped us finally, and a worried man he looked. He told me afterward he was happy enough to see us out of there. He couldn't have

been any gladder than I was, I know that. I took one good drink of the outside air and started after Maynard down the street.

"Gone this way?" I called.

"Yes, running like an elephant in a tent! Saw him just now!"

Well, we footed along, raising racket enough to wake the dead in that graveyard maze. Maze it was too. I couldn't count the corners we banged against nor the blind walls that doubled us back on our own trail. Then there was a grunt and a scuffle, and we'd caught a man.

A man and a monkey, too. It was Old Perce, the tightness (or the pretense of it) gone out of his carcass for good. He actually wailed.

"Where's 'e *gone?* Gord forgi' me!" he chattered and he wailed.

"That's the question," said Maynard, "where *has* he gone?"

We stood there in the dark. By and by we began to walk. There was no use running (no use even moving, for the matter of that). Figure for yourselves: there couldn't have been less than two hundred passages in that sepulcher of an old town, all crisscrossed, all blank, all alike, and all as dark as the pit itself. Hunting a needle in a haystack is one thing; hunting a man who doesn't want to be found in Arab town—a man drunk on a fixed idea—is another.

I can't say how long it was. I only know we walked miles, that I had blisters the size of

quarters on my feet, that I hadn't eaten in years, and that, finally, I resigned.

"That's enough!" said I, pulling up. "Let him go hang!"

"No!" said Maynard. "Not for a million dollars I won't."

The old man had been keeping up his "Gord forgi' me!" every minute of the time. Now he put a hand to his head and changed his tune.

"'Ark, sir! 'Ark to me now. What course from 'ere would fetch us quickest to the *Bab Kebir?*"

"*Bab Kebir?* Now what in the name of the silly devil ——" Maynard stopped and started to scowl at him. Then he turned his head and cocked his ear the other way. "No," said he, "but hark to *that!*"

There was a row somewhere; something had come to life at last in the town of the dead. A thump and a groan it sounded, far off. . . . Maynard was already on his way. I caught up with him, trailing Perce behind.

We went down this alley and up that one and came to the corner of a lane where there was the beginning of a light. The light came toward us; the thump and groan grew louder, coming too. Maynard took one look, and then he put out his arms and herded us back into our alley again.

"No," said he. "It's just as well to keep on the safest side there is. Get into this doorway here."

"What's it about?" I had to ask him.

"The *Aissaoui*—the Mohammedan Society of Jesus. Bound home for their mosque, I guess. They've been out to a torture party somewhere. Get back."

They were already on us. A line of torches swung past the alley mouth, ducking to the roll of those narrow drums of theirs and that damned chant mixed up of a cough and a curse and a groan. I had to peek. I saw them ranked the width of the street, shoulders locked, faces jerked back in the glare and thrown down to their knees again with a perfect surf of their greasy scalp locks whipping the air. Stripped to the waist they were, and their hides looked green. I saw the steel skewers stuck between their ribs and through their necks. Ugh! I don't like them.

Well, on they rolled, three wild and woolly ranks, and behind them a ruck of rooters and hangers-on, going through the same motions of that hellion rite, coughing and moaning and throwing their silly heads.

It was the old tanker that saw. He was out of that door on the jump.

"There! There's my lad! Hi sawr 'im! S'welp me, I sawr 'im, Hi did!"

It was bosh, but he had us craning out of that alley all the same. In another wink he had us on the run. For it wasn't bosh after all, and he was right as right. At the very fag end of the parade, grunting with the best of them, cracking his knee

joints in tune, mouth open, eyes shut, loony as a living loon, was Captain Diplo of the *Gravesend Bars*.

"Nail him!" That was Maynard. Even Maynard—the one of us all who shouldn't have—even Maynard forgot to think.

We nailed him, never doubt. I got him the finest of tackles from the rear, *burnous* and all. Old Perce had an ankle, somewhere below. Enough!

That was where the bomb went off. I wish you could have heard the Mohammedan Society of Jesus go up then. And I wish you could have felt it come down. The last I felt was a foot in my neck. The last I saw was stars.

The longer I lived in Barbary the less I could understand why we weren't all *three* laid away. I thought I was at the time, but I woke up. Maynard was over me. Four Zouaves of the patrol were over Old Perce across the way. I got up. I felt me over. Nothing was gone.

Maynard said: "Thank God! That leaves only one."

"Who? What?"

"I'm afraid the old man's got it."

I went over and looked down between the soldiers. One of them had a bull's-eye, throwing the light on the sailor. One look was enough. He'd got a knife in the wrong place and come to the end of his cruise.

Not quite, though. His eyes opened. I got on

a knee and put my ear down. He wasn't talking too loud.

"That's *my* son. My *boy*. My name's Diplo too. Hi'm goin' to 'Ell, but 'e'll make a name o' that. Honly you got to find 'im. Pass me a hoath, mate. Find 'im and get 'im clear o' 'ere. A hoath, mate ——"

Perce's eyes closed again. The soldiers took him up, but he was dead.

I tell you, gentlemen, it was queer. Marching out of that dead city in the dead of night, carrying the dead. It was too sudden and tragic and pathetic and plain queer. I couldn't think why; not for a long time.

Then it came to me. It was that old fellow's sudden loneliness.

"Maynard," said I, catching up, "where's the monkey gone?"

"How should I know? Scared cross-eyed over the housetops, probably. That's not the question, Gore. The question is; where's the *man?*"

"How about the police—or—have you told these soldiers? About him?"

"I have not. What good would it do, now he's in with that gang. And besides—it would mean facts—Gore, I hate that fellow like poison; if I'm in luck I'll beat him to death one day; but, Gore, I hate to undertake to lose a man his job, with the facts and the hullabaloo. Look here, Gore, I want you to understand this is all bad! Very damn bad!"

Yes, it was. If you'd gone through that night and the next day and another night and another day, you wouldn't forget it was bad.

Every minute of that time was an hour, and an hour's a long time for men with their hands tied and gags in their mouths. All we could do was roam, Maynard and I; roam and stare at walls and chew our hearts to think of our medicine piling up with every one of those minutes, at the *Kasba,* the Residence, the British consulate, our own shop—everywhere we hadn't dared to go and raise the proper hue the first day, even, finally, the second day.

"There's something; if I could only think!" I remembered Maynard saying over and over. "My God, if I could only think!"

"This Diplo is dead," he announced suddenly. "And *we* are in a mess."

That was the second evening. We gave up then. We decided to go to the British consul general bright in the morning, make a clean thing of it, swallow that medicine, and say good-by to our two careers.

That night I slept. The trouble was that Maynard didn't. He was still trying to think. He had me out at four, in the dark of my hotel.

"Listen, Gore; what was it the old man said? Was it *'Bab Kebir'?"*

"Who? When?" I was sleepy and I was sore. "Look here, it's black early yet. That consulate won't be open for hours."

"It was *Bab Kebir,*" he went on with his "thinking." "It's worth a chance. Get into your things."

He took me out in the dark and the cold. There were no hacks at that hour and we had to foot it. He walked me miles around that wall, and he walked me fast. It was almost dawn when we came to the *Bab Kebir,* and that was the first I knew that *Bab* was Gate.

Maynard stopped. I stopped. "Well," said he, "here we are."

"Yes," said I, "here we are. Now what?"

He let go. I don't know what with all his "thinking" he had expected to find, but whatever his fixed idea was, it let him down now with a thud.

"I must have lost too much sleep," was all he could see to say.

"Well, there are hacks now; at least," said I, "we can ride back."

"Give me some coffee first." He put his hand over his middle. He was all gone. There was a *kahwaji* there outside the wall; we sat down on a bench in front, called for coffee and put our heads in our hands to wait.

Well, I suppose this story would never have been told if I'd *kept* my head there; that is, if I hadn't peeked. Idly, you know, between my fingers. Then I sat up. I think my hair actually did stand on end.

You wouldn't see it nowadays; it's all cluttered up with Maltese drinking shops and French apartments. But this is what I saw then, between my

fingers. On my right stood the city wall and the gate, the "vast gate," filled with shadow. Before me, before the gate, spread a square all powdered with white dust. Across the square a row of palm trees ran to pick up a road that lay away straight as a ruler to the world's end—a "painted road across a painted plain" that broke into naked, wrinkled hills against the farthest sky. . . . There it stood between my fingers, colored to the life in three dimensions, the stage scene of Abel Diplo's dream. Even to the camels. . . . There wasn't any moon, to be sure, but that tricky cold gray before the dawn did well enough for that. There was no blackamoor pounding a drum under the arch, but there were Soudan porters asleep there, and a nomad beggar man that might well enough have run with incense while the moon still shone, and at least one veiled female (an awful skinny old one) early at the fountain under the wall.

Yes, it was all there, gentlemen; even to a *burnous*-bundled Arab snoring in the dust under that tree where Diplo had "lusted" (remember?) to creep and lie and "crinkle his toes." It wasn't Diplo's "show"; it was the cold gray dawn of the morning after, and the "supers from Adelphi" were beginning to stretch and rub their eyes. Some of them kicked the "property camels," and the camels yawned too and got their hulks out of the dust, groaning and tinkling their little bells, and began to stretch out along that "painted road"

—some little market caravan, I've no doubt, bound for home again behind the Zaghouan hills.

I took my hands down. I suppose I must have been puffing like a pig.

"What's wrong?" Maynard jogged my elbow. "Here's the coffee come. Here! . . . What *are* you staring at?"

I was staring at that *burnous* under the tree. The *burnous,* upended on its inside haunches, was staring at the caravan, staring and scratching its inside head and staring again. And before I knew it, there it was on its legs, shaking out its folds and starting off at a clock-work, sleep-walk jog along that desert road, "painted" for certain now in the red of dawn. And what its folds had shaken out was following at a hop and skip in the dust—a little monkey as black as sin.

Well, I followed too; it wasn't sleep-walking either, it was a sprint. Happy Days was the first to know. I must have put a foot on his tail; Maynard told me afterward that the little demon let out a yell, looped four loops and went up a tree. I didn't know. I'd got my hand in that purple *burnous* by that and wrapped three times around for luck.

"Diplo!" said I. Just like that.

He turned and he gave me a look. For one wild wink I'd thought I'd been fooled. The fellow had a knife slash down one temple and cheek, a festering, fly-blown gouge; there was a three-days'

growth on him and the muck or all Tunis gone to powder in the hair.

If I'd looked for trouble I was mistaken. He stared at me a minute, clapped his eyes shut, opened them up again, gave a shiver, and "Gore!" he said, and that was all. Great big round tears squeezed out under his lids. Next thing I knew his face was down on my shoulder, and there he was, crying like the infant babe.

"Maynard," said I, "get a hack."

That's the story, gentlemen. The thing was done and it was finished. Chopped off! I saw him three days later on board his ship, the same straight British merchant captain that had brought her out of the Mersey and would take her back again, not a mark for remembrance on him but that one knife cut, and on his sleeve a ribbon of crèpe.

Yes, he'd done that. The ingrained Covenanting conscience of "the street where he was born" had carried him even to that length of honoring publicly in death the filthy old, tipsy old reprobate he hadn't been willing to confess his father, alive.

He took pains to thank me, in two words, without mentioning for what. Then the thing was finished. Finished, done, rooted out, to stay rooted out (so far as I've ever been able to learn) till the end of his days.

That's the story, gentlemen, and if it gives any of you an answer to your question, you're welcome; that's all I can say.

" 'Environment!' That was tne Doctor. 'Given Environment A, tried and true! Given Environment B, bang! Algebra!"

The Tinsmith sat as firmly.

"Heredity! If you can't see how it's heredity, given the facts, I can't bother to explain."

"Given the facts." The Consul studied us around with a quizzical air. "Well, the point is, I suppose, that I haven't given you the facts. . . . No, wait! The facts I've given are facts—all except the fellow's name, and I wouldn't tell you that for the mint—he's left a family behind. What I should have said was, *all* the facts."

And knocking out his pipe for the second time he told us the sequel to the tale.

It happened about a week after Diplo left for home. I was out for a stroll with Bird, my chief (I was glad afterward it wasn't Maynard that day), and we were just coming out of the old town through the *Bab Kebir* (and I was feeling kind of funny to see the place again in the light of day) when Bird called my attention to a wrinkled old henna-haired witch of a woman squatted under the nearest palm.

"Want to buy a monkey, Gore?" he asked me.

The dame had us in eye, straight off. She fingered us to come, grinning and jabbering and kicking her merchandise out into its best light at the end of its *halfa*-line tether. The merchandise was Happy Days.

I stopped. Who wouldn't? Bird took my arm.

"Good Lord, man, you don't want that thing. I was only joking."

"I know," said I. I told him I didn't want the ape, but that I did have a curiosity to know how the woman had come by it. Bird put it to her in dialect. It was like opening up a dam in spring. It seemed to me, waiting patiently, as if she were trying to tell the story of her life against the clock, waving her old bird claws, jerking the beast about, thumbing the jade-bead rings in its ears, scowling and grinning and making a devil of a fuss all told. When she'd begun to run down a little, Bird shifted to me with a grin of his own.

"You wanted to know about that monk. Well, that monk is a romantic and historic monk—a sort of a bread-cast-on-the-waters monk, you must understand. It seems that a good many years back —well, let's see; she calls it the 'starving year,' and that *was* a while ago—in the 'starving year,' it seems, this same woman, sitting under this same tree here, disposed of this same creature for five gold *duoro* to a rolling *roumi* sailor man. She sold it, I gather, in a job lot, along with one painted flute, one stalk of Gafsa dates and one male offspring of her sister Aisha-bint-Bkhar—a three-year-old kid called Abdallah, with "yellow" hair. Now, it seems, very recently, the monk's come back to find her. And now she's waiting patiently for Abdallah to show up too, eating the Gafsa dates, no doubt, and blowing resurrection on the

painted flute. . . . How's that for a romance, offhand? You wanted it, Gore. I should think you'd owe the old lady about one *sou*. Eh?"

I gave her the *sou* and we went along; and that's the sequel to the tale.

It seemed as though the Tinsmith had the word.

"After all, I didn't realize," said he, "just how right I *was*. How about heredity now, Doctor?"

The Doctor didn't answer. After a moment the Consul did.

"Heredity?" he mused. "Yes—yes ——" He put up a finger and a thumb and opened them apart, like a man releasing a feather of thistledown in the wind. "Yes, heredity, about *so* much. About *so* long—out of a life. . . . This man I've called Diplo was torpedoed off the Galway coast on New Year, Seventeen, and went down praying God to save his king."

THE MARRIAGE IN KAIRWAN

KAIRWAN the Holy lay asleep, pent in its thick walls. The moon had sunk at midnight, but the chill light seemed scarcely to have diminished; only the limewashed city had become a marble city, and all the towers turned fabulous in the fierce, dry needle-rain of the stars that burn over the desert of mid Tunisia.

In the street Bab Djedid the nailed boots of the watch passed from west to east. When their thin racket had turned out and died in the dust of the market, Habib ben Habib emerged from the shadow of a door arch and, putting a foot on the tiled ledge of Bou-Kedj's fry shop, swung up by cranny and gutter till he stood on the plain of the housetops.

Now he looked about him, for on this dim tableland he walked with his life in his hands. He looked to the west, toward the gate, to the south, to the northeast through the ghostly wood of minarets. Then, perceiving nothing that stirred, he went on, moving without sound in the camel-skin slippers he had taken from his father's court.

In the uncertain light, but for those slippers and the long-tasseled *chechia* on his head, one would not have taken him for anything but a

European and a stranger. And one would have been right, almost. In the city of his birth and rearing, and of the birth and rearing of his Arab fathers generations dead, Habib ben Habib bel-Kalfate looked upon himself in the rebellious, romantic light of a prisoner in exile—exile from the streets of Paris where, in his four years, he had tasted the strange delights of the Christian—exile from the university where he had dabbled with his keen, light-ballasted mind in the learning of the conqueror.

Sometimes, in the month since he had come home, he had shaken himself and wondered aloud, "Where am I?" with the least little hint, perhaps, of melodrama. Sometimes, in the French café outside the walls, among the officers of the garrison, a bantering perversity drove him on to chant the old glories of Islam, the poets of Andalusia, and the bombastic histories of the saints; and in the midst of it, his face pink with the Frenchmen's wine and his own bitter, half-frightened mockery, he would break off suddenly, *"Voilà, messieurs!* you will see that I am the best of Mussulmans!" He would laugh then in a key so high and restless that the commandant, shaking his head, would murmur to the lieutenant beside him, "One day, Genet, we must be on the alert for a dagger in that quarter there, eh?"

And Genet, who knew almost as much of the character of the university Arab as the commandant himself, would nod his head.

When Habib had laughed for a moment he would grow silent. Presently he would go out into the ugly dark of the foreign quarter, followed very often by Raoul Genet. He had known Raoul most casually in Paris. Here in the Tunisian *bled,* when Raoul held out his hand to say good-night under the gate lamp at the Bab Djelladin, the troubled fellow clung to it. The smell of the African city, coming under the great brick arch, reached and closed around him like a hand—a hand bigger than Raoul's.

"You are my brother; not they. I am not of these people, Raoul!"

But then he would go in, under the black arch and the black shade of the false-pepper trees. In the darkness he felt the trees, centuries old, and all the blank houses, watching him. . . .

To-night, stealing across the sleeping roofs, he felt the starlit mosque towers watching him in secret, the pale, silent espionage of those who could wait. The hush of the desert troubled him. Youth troubled him. His lips were dry.

He had come to an arbor covered with a vine. Whose it was, on what householder's roof it was reared, he had never known. He entered.

"She is not here." He moistened his lips with his tongue.

He sat down on the stone divan to wait, watching toward the west through the doorway, across which hung a loop of vine, like a snake.

He saw her a long way off, approaching by swift darts and intervals of immobility, when her whiteness grew a part of the whiteness of the terrace. It was so he had seen her moving on that first night when, half tipsy with wine and strangeness, he had pursued, caught her, and uncovered her face.

To-night she uncovered it herself. She put back the hooded fold of her *haik,* showing him her face, her scarlet mouth, her wide eyes, long at the outer corners, her hair aflame with henna.

The hush of a thousand empty miles lay over the city. For an hour nothing lived but the universe, the bright dust in the sky. . . .

That hush was disrupted. The single long crash of a human throat! Rolling down over the plain of the housetops!

"La illah il Allah, Mohammed rassoul 'lah! Allah Akbar! God is great!"

One by one the dim towers took it up. The call to prayer rolled between the stars and the town. It searched the white runways. It penetrated the vine-bowered arbor. Little by little, tower by tower, it died. In a *fondouk* outside the gate a waking camel lifted a gargling wail. A jackal dog barked in the Oued Zaroud two miles away. And again the silence of the desert came up over the city walls.

Under the vine Habib whispered: "No, I don't care anything about thy name. A name is such a little thing. I'll call thee 'Nedjma,' because we are under the stars."

"*Ai, Nedjmetek*—'Thy Star'!" The girl's lips moved drowsily. In the dark her eyes shone with a dull, steady luster, unblinking, unquestioning, always unquestioning.

That slumberous acquiescence, taken from all her Arab mothers, began to touch his nerves with the old uneasiness. He took her shoulders between his hands and shook her roughly, crying in a whisper:

"Why dost thou do nothing but repeat my words? Talk! Say things to me! Thou art like the rest; thou wouldst try to make me seem like these Arab men, who wish for nothing in a woman but the shadow of themselves. And I am not like that!"

"No, *sidi,* no."

"But talk! Tell me things, about thyself, thy life, thy world. Talk! In Paris, now, a man and a woman can talk together—yes—as if they were two friends met in a coffeehouse. And those women can talk! Ah! in Paris I have known women ——"

The girl stirred now. Her eyes narrowed; the dark line of her lips thinned. At last something comprehensible had touched her mind.

"Thou hast known many women, then, *sidi!* Thou hast come here but to tell me that? Me, who am of little beauty in a man's eyes!"

Habib laughed under his breath. He shook her again. He kissed her and kissed her again on her red lips.

"Thou art jealous, then! But thou canst not comprehend. Canst thou comprehend this, that thou art more beautiful by many times than any other woman I have ever seen? Thou art a heaven of loveliness and I cannot live without thee. That is true. . . . Nedjma. I am going to take thee for my wife, because I cannot live without thine eyes, thy lips, the fragrance of thy hair. . . . Yes, I am going to marry thee, my star. It is written! It is written!"

For the first time he could not see her eyes. She had turned them away. Once again something had come in contact with the smooth, heavy substance of her mind. He pulled at her.

"Say! Say, Nedjma! . . . It is written!"

"It is not written, *sidi.*" The same ungroping acquiescence was in her whisper. "I have been promised, *sidi,* to another than thee."

Habib's arms let go; her weight sank away in the dark under the vine. The silence of the dead night crept in and lay between them.

"And in the night of thy marriage, then, thy husband—or thy father, if thou hast a father—will kill thee."

"*In-cha-'llah.* If it be the will of God."

Again the silence came and lay heavy between them. A minute and another minute went away. Habib's wrists were shaking. His breast began to heave. With a sudden roughness he took her back, to devour her lips and eyes and hair with the violence of his kisses.

"No, no! I'll not have it! No! Thou art too beautiful for any other man than me even to look upon! No, no, no!"

Habib ben Habib walked out of the gate Djelladin. The day had come; the dawn made a crimson flame in the false-pepper trees. The life of the gate was already at full tide of sound and color, braying, gargling, quarreling—nomads wading in their flocks, Djlass countrymen, Singalese soldiers, Jewish pack-peddlers, Bedouin women bent double under their stacks of desert fire grass, streaming inward, dust white, dust yellow, and all red in the dawn under the red wall.

The flood ran against him. It tried to suck him back into the maw of the city. He fought against it with his shoulders and his knees. He tried not to run. It sucked him back. A wandering *Aissaoua* plucked at his sleeve and held under his nose a desert viper that gave all metallic rose glints in its slow, pained constrictions.

"To the glory of Sidna Aissa, master, two sous."

He kept tugging at Habib's sleeve, holding him back, sucking him back with his twisting reptile into the city of the faithful.

"In the name of Jesus, master, two copper sous!"

Habib's nerves snapped. He struck off the holy mendicant with his fist. "That the devil grill thee!" he chattered. He ran. He bumped into beasts. He bumped into a blue tunic. He halted,

blinked, and passed a hand over his hot-lidded eyes. He stammered:

"My friend! I have been looking for you! *Hamdou lillah! El hamdou 'llah!*"

Raoul Genet, studying the flushed, bright-eyed, unsteady youth, put up a hand to cover a little smile, half ironic, half pitying.

"So, Habib ben Habib, you revert! Camel drivers' talk in your mouth and camel's-hide slippers on your feet. Already you revert! Eh?"

"No, that is not the truth. But I am in need of a friend."

"You look like a ghost, Habib." The faint smile still twisted Raoul's lips. "Or a drunken angel. You have not slept."

"That's of no importance. I tell you I am in need ——"

"You've not had coffee, Habib. When you've had coffee ——"

"Coffee! My God! Raoul, that you go on talking of coffee when life and death are in the balance! For I can't live without —— Listen, now! Strictly! I have need to-night—to-morrow night—one night when it is dark—I have need of the garrison car."

The other made a blowing sound. "I'm the commandant, am I, overnight? *Zut!* The garrison car!"

Habib took hold of his arm and held it tight. "If not the car, two horses, then. And I call you my friend."

"*Two* horses! Ah! So! I begin to perceive. Youth! Youth!"

"Don't gibe, Raoul! I have need of two horses —two horses that are fast and strong."

"Are the horses in thy father's stable, then, of no swiftness and of no strength?"

It was said in the *patois,* the bastard Arabic of the Tunisian *bled.* A shadow had fallen across them; the voice came from above. From the height of his crimson saddle Si Habib bel-Kalfate awaited the answer of his son. His brown, unlined, black-bearded face, shadowed in the hood of his creamy burnoose, remained serene, benign, urbanely attendant. But if an Arab knows when to wait, he knows also when not to wait. And now it was as if nothing had been said before.

"Greeting, my son. I have been seeking thee. Thy couch was not slept upon last night."

Habib's face was sullen to stupidity. "Last night, sire, I slept at the *caserne,* at the invitation of my friend, Lieutenant Genet, whom you see beside me."

The Arab, turning in his saddle, appeared to notice the Christian for the first time. His lids drooped; his head inclined an inch.

"Greeting to thee, oh master!"

"To thee, greeting!"

"Thou art in well being?"

"There is no ill. And thou?"

"There is no ill. That the praise be to God, and the prayer!"

Bel-Kalfate cleared his throat and lifted the reins from the neck of his mare.

"Rest in well being!" he pronounced.

Raoul shrugged his shoulders a little and murmured: "May God multiply thy days! . . . And yours, too," he added to Habib in French. He bowed and took his leave.

Bel-Kalfate, sitting his saddle stolidly in an attitude of rumination, watched him away through the thinning crowd. When the blue cap had vanished behind the blazing corner of the wool dyers, he threw the reins to his Sudanese stirrup boy and got down to the ground. He took his son's hand. So, palm in palm, at a grave pace, they walked back under the arch into the city. The market-going stream was nearly done. The tide, against which at its flood Habib had fought and won ground, carried him down again with its last shallow wash —so easily!

His nerves had gone slack. He walked in a heavy white dream. The city drew him deeper into its murmurous heart. The walls pressed closer and hid him away. The *souks* swallowed him under their shadowy arcades. The breadth of the bazaar, fetor of offal, stench of raw leather, and all the creeping perfumes of Barbary, attar of roses, chypre and amber and musk, clogged his senses like the drug of some abominable seduction. He was weary, weary, weary. And in a strange, troubling way he was at rest.

"Mektoub! It is written! It is written in the book of the destiny of man!"

With a kind of hypnotic fascination, out of the corners of his eyes, he took stock of the face beside him, the face of the strange being that was his father—the broad, moist, unmarked brow; the large eyes, heavy-lidded, serene; the full-fleshed cheeks, from which the beard sprang soft and rank, and against which a hyacinth, pendent over the ear, showed with a startling purity of pallor; and the mobile, deep-colored, humid lips—the lips of the voluptuary, the eyes of the dreamer, the brow of the man of never-troubled faith.

"Am I like that?" And then, "What can that one be to me?"

As if in answer, bel-Kalfate's gaze came to his son.

"I love thee," he said, and he kissed Habib's temple with his lips. "Thou art my son," he went on, "and my eyes were thirsty to drink of the sight of thee. It is *el jammaa*.[1] It is time we should go to the prayer. We shall go with Hadji Daoud to-day, for afterward, there at the mosque, I have rendezvous with his friends, in the matter of the dowry. It is the day, thou rememberest, that he appointed."

Habib wanted to stop. He wanted to think. He wanted time. But the serene, warm pressure of his father's hand carried him on.

Stammering words fell from his mouth.

[1] Friday, the Mohammedan Sabbath.

"My mother—I remember—my mother, it is true, said something—but I did not altogether comprehend—and—Oh! my sire ——"

"Thou shall be content. Thou art a man now. The days of thy learning are accomplished. Thou hast suffered exile; now is thy reward prepared. And the daughter of the notary, thy betrothed, is as lovely as a palm tree in the morning and as mild as sweet milk, beauteous as a pearl, Habib, a milk-white pearl. See!"

Drawing from his burnoose a sack of Moroccan lambskin, he opened it and lifted out a pearl. His fingers, even at rest, seemed to caress it. They slid back among the treasure in the sack, the bargaining price for the first wife of the only son of a man blessed by God. And now they brought forth also a red stone, cut in the fashion of Tunis.

"A milk-white sea pearl, look thou; to wed in a jewel with the blood-red ruby that is the son of my breast. Ah, Habib, my Habib, but thou shalt be content!"

They stood in the sunlight before the green door of a mosque. As the hand of the city had reached out for Habib through the city gate, so now the prayer, throbbing like a tide across the pillared mystery of the court, reached out through the doorway in the blaze. . . . And he heard his own voice, strange in his mouth, shallow as a bleat:

"Why, then, sire—why, oh! why, then, hast thou allowed me to make of those others the friends of my spirit, the companions of my mind?"

"They are neither companions nor friends of thine, for God is God!"

"And why hast thou sent me to learn the teaching of the French?"

"When thou settest thy horse against an enemy it is well to have two lances to thy hand—thine own and his. . . . And it is written, Habib, son of Habib, that thou shalt be content. . . . Put off thy shoes now and come. It is time we were at prayer."

Summer died. Autumn grew. With the approach of winter an obscure nervousness spread over the land. In the dust of its eight months' drought, from one day to another, from one glass-dry night to another, the desert waited for the coming of the rains. The earth cracked. A cloud sailing lone and high from the coast of Sousse passed under the moon, and everywhere men stirred in their sleep, woke, looked out—from their tents on the cactus steppes, from *fondouks* on the camel tracks of the west, from marble courts of Kairwan. . . . The cloud passed on and vanished in the sky. On the plain the earth cracks crept and ramified. Gaunt beasts tugged at their heel ropes and would not be still. The jackals came closer to the tents. The city slept again, but in its sleep it seemed to mutter and twitch. . . .

In the serpent-spotted light under the vine on the housetop Habib muttered, too, and twitched a little. It was as if the arid months had got in

under his skin and peeled off the coverings of his nerves. The girl's eyes widened with a gradual, phlegmatic wonder of pain under the pinch of his blue fingers on her arms. His face was the color of the moon.

"Am I a child of three years, that my father should lead me here or lead me there by the hand? Am I that?"

"Nay, *sidi,* nay."

"Am I a sheep between two wells, that the herder's stick should tell me, 'Here, and not there, thou shalt drink'? Am I a sheep?"

"Thou art neither child nor sheep, *sidi,* but a lion!"

"Yes, a lion!" A sudden thin exaltation shook him like a fever chill. "I am more than a lion, Nedjma, I am a man—just as the *Roumi* [1] are men —men who decide—men who undertake—agitate —accomplish . . . and now, for the last time, I have decided. A fate has given thy loveliness to me, and no man shall take it away from me to enjoy. I will take it away from them instead! From all the men of this Africa, conquered by the French. Hark! I will come and take thee away in the night, to the land beyond the sea, where thou mayest be always near me, and neither God nor man say yes or no!"

"And there, *sidi,* beyond the sea, I may talk unveiled with other men? As thou hast told me, in France ——"

[1] Romans—*i.e.,* Christians.

"Yes, yes, as I have told thee, there thou mayest —thou ——"

He broke off, lost in thought, staring down at the dim oval of her face. Again he twitched a little. Again his fingers tightened on her arms. He twisted her around with a kind of violence of confrontation.

"But wouldst thou rather talk with other men than with me? Dost thou no longer love me, then?"

"*Ai,* master, I love thee. I wish to see no other man than thee."

"Ah, my star, I know!" He drew her close and covered her face with his kisses.

And in her ear he whispered: "And when I come for thee in the night, thou wilt go with me? Say!"

"I will go, *sidi. In-cha-'llah!* If God will!"

At that he shook her again, even more roughly than before.

"Don't say that! Not, 'If God will!' Say to me, 'If *thou* wilt!' "

"*Ai* —— *Ai* ——"

There was a silence.

"But let it be quickly," he heard her whispering, after awhile. Under his hand he felt a slow shiver moving over her arms. "*Nekaf!*" she breathed, so low that he could hardly hear. "I am afraid."

It was another night when the air was electric and men stirred in their sleep. Lieutenant Genet turned over in bed and stared at the moonlight

streaming in through the window from the court of the *caserne*. In the moonlight stood Habib.

"What do you want?" Genet demanded, gruff with sleep.

"I came to you because you are my friend."

The other rubbed his eyes and peered through the window to mark the Sudanese sentry standing awake beside his box at the gate.

"How did you get in?"

"I got in as I shall get out, not only from here, but from Kairwan, from Africa—because I am a man of decision."

"You are also, Habib, a skeleton. The moon shows through you. What have you been doing these weeks, these months, that you should be so shivery and so thin? Is it Old Africa gnawing at your bones? Or are you, perhaps, in love?"

"I am in love. Yes. . . . *Ai, ai,* Raoul *habiby,* if but thou couldst see her—the lotus bloom opening at dawn—the palm tree in a land of streams ——"

"Talk French!" Genet got his legs over the side of the bed and sat up. He passed a hand through his hair. "You are in love, then . . . and again I tell you, for perhaps the twentieth time, Habib, that between a man and a woman in Islam there is no such thing as love."

"But I am not in Islam. I am not in anything! And if you could but see her ——"

"Lust!"

"What do you mean by 'lust'?"

"Lust is the thing you find where you don't find trust. Lust is a priceless perfume that a man has in a crystal vial, and he is the miser of its fragrance. He closes the windows when he takes the stopper out of that bottle to drink its breath, and he puts the stopper back quickly again, so that it will not evaporate—not too soon."

"But that, Raoul, is love! All men know that for love. The priceless perfume in a crystal beyond price."

"Yes, love, too, is the perfume in the vial. But the man who has that vial opens the windows and throws the stopper away, and all the air is sweet, forever. The perfume evaporates, forever. And this, Habib, is the miracle. The vial is never any emptier than when it began."

"Yes, yes—I know—perhaps—but to-night I have no time ——"

The moon *did* shine through him. He was but a rag blown in the dark wind. He had been torn to pieces too long.

"I have no time!" he repeated, with a feverish force. "Listen, Raoul, my dear friend. To-day the price was paid in the presence of the *cadi,* Ben Iskhar. Three days from now they lead me to marriage with the daughter of the notary. What, to me, is the daughter of the notary? They lead me like a sheep to kill at a tomb. . . . Raoul, for the sake of our friendship, give me hold of your hand. To-morrow night—the car! Or, if you say you haven't the disposal of the car, bring me

horses." And again the shaking of his nerves got the better of him; again he tumbled back into the country tongue. "For the sake of God, bring me two horses! By Sidna Aissa! by the Three Hairs from the Head of the Prophet I swear it! My first-born shall be named for thee, Raoul. Only bring thou horses! Raoul! Raoul!"

It was the whine of the beggar of Barbary. Genet lay back, his hands behind his head, staring into the shadows under the ceiling.

"Better the car. I'll manage it with some lies. To-morrow night at moonset I'll have the car outside the gate Djedid." After a moment he added, under his breath, "But I know your kind too well, Habib ben Habib, and I know that you will not be there."

Habib was not there. From moonset till half past three, well over two hours, Genet waited, sitting on the stone in the shadow of the gate or prowling the little square inside. He smoked twenty cigarettes. He yawned three times twenty times. At last he went out, got into the car and drove away.

As the throb of the engine grew faint a figure in European clothes and a long-tasseled *chechia* crept out from the dark of a door arch along the street. It advanced toward the gate. It started back at a sound. It rallied again, a figure bedeviled by vacillation. It came as far as the well in the center of the little square.

On the horizon toward the coast of Sousse rested a low black wall of cloud. Lightning came out of it from time to time and ran up the sky, soundless, glimmering. . . . The cry of the morning muezzin rolled down over the town. The lightning showed the figure sprawled face down on the cool stone of the coping of the well. . . .

The court of the house of bel-Kalfate swam in the glow of candles. A striped awning shut out the night sky, heavy with clouds, and the women, crowding for stolen peeps on the flat roof. A confusion of voices, raillery, laughter, eddied around the arcaded walls, and thin music bound it together with a monotonous count of notes.

Through the doorway from the marble *entresol* where he stood, Habib could see his father, cross-legged on a dais, with the notary. They sat hand in hand like big children, conversing gravely. With them was the *caid* of Kairwan, the *cadi,* ben Iskhar, and a dark-skinned cousin from the oases of the Djerid in the south. Their garments shone; there was perfume in their beards. On a rostrum beyond and above the crowded heads the musicians swayed at their work—*tabouka* players with strong, nervous thumbs; an oily, gross lutist; an organist, watching everything with the lizard eyes of the hashish taker. Among them, behind a taborette piled with bait of food and drink, the Jewish dancing woman from Algiers lolled in her cushions, a drift of white disdain. . . .

He saw it all through a kind of mist. It was as if time had halted, and he was still at the steaming *hammam* of the afternoon, his spirit and his flesh undone, and all about him in the perfumed vapor of the bath the white bodies of his boyhood comrades glimmering luminous and opalescent.

His flesh was still asleep, and so was his soul. The hand of his father city had come closer about him, and for a moment it seemed that he was too weary, or too lazy, to push it away. For a little while he drifted with the warm and perfumed cloud of the hours.

Hands turned him around. It was Houseen Abdelkader, the *caid's* son, the comrade of long ago—Houseen in silk of wine and silver, hyacinths pendent on his cheeks, a light of festival in his eyes.

"Es-selam alekoum, ya Habib habiby!" It was the salutation in the plural—to Habib, and to the angels that walk, one at either shoulder of every son of God. And as he spoke he threw a new white burnoose over Habib's head, so that it hung down straight and covered him like a bridal veil.

"Alekoum selam, ya Seenou!" It was the name of boyhood. Seenou, the diminutive, that fell from Habib's lips. And he could not call it back.

"Come thou now." He felt the gentle push of Houseen's hands. He found himself moving toward the door that stood open into the street. The light of an outer conflagration was in his eyes. The thin music of lute and *tabouka* in the court behind him grew thinner; the boom of drums and

voices in the street grew big. He had crossed the threshold. A hundred candles, carried in horizontal banks on laths by little boys, came around him on three sides, like footlights. And beyond the glare, in the flaming mist, he saw the street Dar-el-Bey massed with men. All their faces were toward him, hot yellow spots in which the black spots of their mouths gaped and vanished.

"That the marriage of Habib be blessed! Blessed be the marriage of Habib!"

The riot of sound began to take form. It began to emerge in a measure, a *boom-boom-boom* of tambours and big goatskin drums. A bamboo fife struck into a high, quavering note. The singing club of Sidibou-Saïd joined voice.

The footlights were moving forward toward the street of the market. Habib moved with them a few slow paces, without effort or will. And again they had all stopped. It could not be more than two hundred yards to the house of the notary and his waiting bride, but by the ancient tradition of Kairwan an hour must be consumed on the way.

An hour! An eternity! Panic came over Habib. He turned his hooded eyes for some path of escape. To the right, Houseen! To the left, close at his shoulder, Mohammed Sherif—Mohammed the laughing and well-beloved—Mohammed, with whom in the long, white days he used to chase lizards by the pool of the Aglabides . . . in the long, white, happy days, while beyond the veil of palms the swaying camel palanquins of

women, like huge, bright blooms, went northward up the Tunis road. . . .

What made him think of that?

"Boom-boom-boom-boom!" And around the drums beyond the candles he heard them singing:

On the day of the going away of my Love,
When the litters, carrying the women of the tribe,
Traversed the valley of Dad, like a sea, mirage,
They were like ships, great ships, the work of the children of Adoul,
Or like the boats of Yamen's sons. . . .

"Boom-boom!" The monotonous pulse, the slow minor slide of sixteenth tones, the stark rests —he felt the hypnotic pulse of the old music tampering with the pulse of his blood. It gave him a queer creeping fright. He shut his eyes, as if that would keep it out. And in the glow of his lids he saw the tents on the naked desert; he saw the forms of veiled women; he saw the horses of warriors coming like a breaker over the sand—the horses of the warriors of God!

He pulled the burnoose over his lids to make them dark. And even in the dark he could see. He saw two eyes gazing at his, untroubled, untroubling, out of the desert night. And they were the eyes of any woman—the eyes of his bride, of his sister, his mother, the eyes of his mothers a thousand years dead.

"Master!" they said.

They were pushing him forward by the elbows, Mohammed and Houseen. He opened his eyes.

The crowd swam before him through the yellow glow. Something had made an odd breach in his soul, and through the breach came memories.

Memories! There at his left was the smoky shelf of blind Moulay's café—black-faced, white-eyed old Moulay. Moulay was dead now, many years, but the men still sat in the same attitudes, holding the same cups, smoking the same *chibouk* with the same gulping of bubbles as in the happy days. And there between the café and the *souk* gate was the same whitewashed niche where three lads used to sit with their feet tucked under their little *kashabias,* their *chechias* awry on their shaven polls, and their lips pursed to spit after the leather legs of the infidel conquerors passing by. The *Roumi,* the French blasphemers, the defilers of the mosque! Spit on the dogs! Spit!

Behind his reverie the drums boomed, the voices chanted. The lament of drums and voices beat at the back of his brain—while he remembered the three lads sitting in the niche, waiting from one white day to another for the coming of Moulay Saa, the Messiah; watching for the Holy War to begin.

"And I shall ride in the front rank of the horsemen, please God!"

"And I, I shall ride at Moulay Saa's right hand, please God, and I shall cut the necks of *Roumi* with my sword, like barley straw!"

Habib advanced in the spotlight of the candles. Under the burnoose his face, half shadowed,

looked green and white, as if he were sick to his death. Or, perhaps, as if he were being born again.

The minutes passed, and they were hours. The music went on, interminable, *"Boom-boom-boom-boom* ——" But now Habib himself was the instrument, and now the old song of his race played its will on him.

Pinkness began to creep over the green-white cheeks. The cadence of the chanting had changed. It grew ardent, melting, voluptuous.

. . . And conquests I have made among the fair ones, perfume inundated,
Beauties ravishing, that sway in an air of musk and saffron,
Bearing still on their white necks the traces of kisses. . . .

It hung under the pepper trees, drunk with the beauty of flesh, fainting with passion. Above the trees mute lightning played in the cloud. Habib ben Habib was born again. Again, after exile, he came back into the heritage. He saw the heaven of the men of his race. He saw Paradise in a walking dream. He saw women forever young and forever lovely in a land of streams, women forever changing, forever virgin, forever new; strangers intimate and tender. The angels of a creed of love—or of lust!

"Lust is the thing you find where you don't find trust."

A thin echo of the Frenchman's diatribe flickered through his memory, and he smiled. He smiled because his eyes were open now. He

seemed to see this Christian fellow sitting on his bed, barefooted, rumple-haired, talking dogmatically of perfumes and vials and stoppers thrown away, talking of faith in women. And that was the jest. For he seemed to see the women, over there in Paris, that the brothers of that naïve fellow trusted—trusted alone with a handsome young university student from Tunisia. Ha, ha, ha! Now he remembered. He wanted to laugh out loud at a race of men that could be as simple as that. He wanted to laugh at the bursting of the iridescent bubble of faith in the virtue of beautiful women. The Arab knew!

A color of health was on his face; his step had grown confident. Of a sudden, and very quietly, all the mixed past was blotted out. He heard only the chanting voices and the beating drums.

Once I came into the tent of a young beauty on a day of rain. . . .
Beauty blinding. . . . Charms that ravished and made drunkards of the eyes. . . .

His blood ran with the song, pulse and pulse. The mute lightning came down through the trees and bathed his soul. And, shivering a little, he let his thoughts go for the first time to the strange and virgin creature that awaited his coming there, somewhere, behind some blind house wall, so near.

"Thou hast suffered exile. Now is thy reward prepared."

What a fool! What a fool he had been!

He wanted to run now. The lassitude of

months was gone from his limbs. He wanted to fling aside that clogging crowd, leap, arrive. How long was this hour? Where was he? He tried to see the housetops to know, but the glow was in his eyes. He felt the hands of his comrades on his arms.

But now there was another sound in the air. His ears, strained to the alert, caught it above the drums and voices—a thin, high ululation. It came from behind high walls and hung among the leaves of the trees, a phantom yodeling, the welcoming *"you-you-you-you"* of the women of Islam.

Before him he saw that the crowd had vanished. Even the candles went away. There was a door, and the door was open.

He entered, and no one followed. He penetrated alone into an empty house of silence, and all around him the emptiness moved and the silence rustled.

He traversed a court and came into a chamber where there was a light. He saw a negress, a Sudanese duenna, crouching in a corner and staring at him with white eyes. He turned toward the other side of the room.

She sat on a high divan, like a throne, her hands palms together, her legs crossed. In the completeness of her immobility she might have been a doll, or a corpse. After the strict fashion of brides, her eyebrows were painted in thick black arches, her lips drawn in scarlet, her cheeks splashed with rose. Her face was a mask, and jewels in a crust

hid the flame of her hair. Under the stiff kohl of their lids her eyes turned neither to the left nor to the right. She seemed not to breathe. It is a dishonor for a maid to look or to breathe in the moment when her naked face suffers for the first time the gaze of the lord whom she has never seen.

A minute passed away.

"This is the thing that is mine!" A blinding exultation ran through his brain and flesh. "Better this than the 'trust' of fools and infidels! No question here of 'faith.' *Here I know!* I know that this thing that is mine has not been bandied about by the eyes of all the men in the world. I know that this perfume has never been breathed by the passers in the street. I know that it has been treasured from the beginning in a secret place —against this moment—for me. This bud has come to its opening in a hidden garden; no man has ever looked upon it; no man will ever look upon it. None but I."

He roused himself. He moved nearer, consumed with the craving and exquisite curiosity of the new. He stood before the dais and gazed into the unwavering eyes. As he gazed, as his sight forgot the grotesque doll painting of the face around those eyes, something queer began to come over him. A confusion. Something bothering. A kind of fright.

"Thou!" he breathed.

Her icy stillness endured. Not once did her

dilated pupils waver from the straight line. Not once did her bosom lift with breath.

"*Thou!* It is *thou,* then, O runner on the housetops by night!"

The fright of his soul grew deeper, and suddenly it went out. And in its place there came a black calm.

The eyes before him remained transfixed in the space beyond his shoulder. But by and by the painted lips stirred once.

"*Nekaf!* . . . I am afraid!"

Habib turned away and went out of the house.

In the house of bel-Kalfate the Jewess danced, still, even in voluptuous motion, a white drift of disdain. The music eddied under the rayed awning. Raillery and laughter were magnified. More than a little *bokha,* the forbidden liquor distilled of figs, had been consumed in secret. Eyes gleamed; lips hung. . . . Alone in the thronged court, on the dais, the host and the notary, the *caid,* the *cadi* and the cousin from the south continued to converse in measured tones, holding their coffee cups in their palms.

"It comes to me on thought," pronounced bel-Kalfate, inclining his head toward the notary with an air of courtly deprecation—"it comes to me that thou hast been defrauded. For what is a trifle of ten thousand *douros* of silver as against the rarest jewel (I am certain, *sidi*) that has ever crowned the sex which thou mayest perhaps forgive me for mentioning?"

And in the same tone, with the same gesture, Hadji Daoud replied: "Nay, master and friend, by the Beard of the Prophet, but I should repay thee the half. For that is a treasure for a sultan's daughter, and this *fillette* of mine (forgive me) is of no great beauty or worth ——"

"In saying that, Sidi Hadji, thou sayest a thing which is at odds with half the truth."

They were startled at the voice of Habib coming from behind their backs.

"For thy daughter, Sidi Hadji, thy Zina, is surely as lovely as the full moon sinking in the west in the hour before the dawn."

The words were fair. But bel-Kalfate was looking at his son's face.

"Where are thy comrades?" he asked, in a low voice. "How hast thou come?" Then, with a hint of haste: "The dance is admirable. It would be well that we should remain quiet, Habib, my son."

But the notary continued to face the young man. He set his cup down and clasped his hands about his knee. The knuckles were a little white.

"May I beg thee, Habib ben Habib, that thou shouldst speak the thing which is in thy mind?"

"There is only this, *sidi;* a little thing: When thou hast another bird to vend in the market of hearts, it would perhaps be well to examine with care the cage in which thou hast kept that bird.

"Thy daughter," he added, after a moment of silence—"thy daughter, Sidi Hadji, is with child."

That was all that was said. Hadji Daoud lifted his cup and drained it, sucking politely at the dregs. The *cadi* coughed. The *caid* raised his eyes to the awning and appeared to listen. Then he observed, "To-night, *in-cha-'llah,* it will rain." The notary pulled his burnoose over his shoulders, groped down with his toes for his slippers, and got to his feet.

"Rest in well-being!" he said. Then, without haste, he went out.

Habib followed him tardily as far as the outer door. In the darkness of the empty street he saw the loom of the man's figure moving off toward his own house, still without any haste.

"And in the night of thy marriage thy husband, or thy father, if thou hast a father ——"

Habib did not finish with the memory. He turned and walked a few steps along the street. He could still hear the music and the clank of the Jewess's silver in his father's court. . . .

"In-cha'llah!" she had said, that night.

And, after all, it *had* been the will of God. . . .

A miracle had happened. All the dry pain had gone out of the air. Just now the months of waiting for the winter rains were done. All about him the big, cool drops were spattering on the invisible stones. The rain bathed his face. His soul was washed with the waters of the merciful God of Arab men.

For, after all, from the beginning, it had been written. All written!

"Mektoub!"

"HE THAT HIDETH HIS SECRET"

"When thou makest a reprisal, see that it be in kind with the offense which thou hast suffered."—*The Koran.*

An Arab proverb: "Distrust thine enemy; a thousand times distrust thy friend."

BELGASEM, the son of Fredj, sheik of the Beni Khmaïs, killed M'barek ben Mabrouk of the Ouled Zab. That was one springtime when all the face of the mountain range of the Ouled Naïl was covered with mustard and jonquil where the Sahara tribes came up by Laghouat for their summer pasturage.

M'barek had taken a bride. After the custom of the Algerian nomads, he left her and went out of the tent before the dawn of the morrow of the marriage. It was then, as he emerged, stooping, in the first gray of light, that he was killed by Belgasem, who had desired the same girl. Belgasem shot from ambush behind a desert tumbleweed which he had brought up from the bed of the dry *oued* thirty paces at his back. After the shot he waited a cool ten seconds, watching along the barrel of his musket the figure huddled on the tent flap. Only at the end of that time, when the figure no longer stirred, did he spit on the warm barrel, blow out the smoke, creep back to the shelter of

the *oued* where he had left his horse, mount, and, putting the corners of his bronze stirrups into the animal's belly, ride at full gallop to the west.

In the Oued Hallouf, the Vale of the Pig, the tents of the Beni Khmaïs were already struck, the camels laden, the women and the milch goats on the march. Belgasem told his father what he had done.

"That is no thing to weigh lightly in the hand," said Fredj. Then he said: "Thy brother, Mulchas, as thou knowest, is leading the date caravan northward through the markets to the west of the Djebel Armour. Go thou and join Mulchas. It is better. And tell Mulchas that the summer rendezvous is changed to Aflou; for this reason we shall not go Djelfa way. The peace of God rest with thee, my son. Ride!"

When the news came to Djelfa, the nomad capital high in the hills, the men in the market and the coffee stalls shook their heads.

"A blood-feud betwixt the Beni Khmaïs and the Ouled Zab, thou sayest? These be bad tidings, friend."

Their heads shook, but their eyes glittered, for in their Arab hearts they loved the thought of it, the night raids, *razzias,* ambuscades, and "the talking of powder."

"Who sees the end of this?" they said. "What man can say on what day or in what moon the head of M'barek will be buried with his bones? For if it is well known that the Children of Zab have

never forgot an injury since the beginning of time, it is also well known that the Sons of Khmaïs have never been the men to smooth one over by payment of the blood money ordained by the law. They are the kind who prefer rather to eat coals and breathe out flame. No, one can only say that the Houris in paradise will have company before this year is dead."

That prophecy failed. That summer the Beni Khmaïs stayed well to the west toward the borders of Morocco, and when they went south again it was early in the autumn, and at night they set watchers about their camp. For that year, at least, the murder of M'barek remained unpaid.

His mother, Zina, daughter of Daoud, had kept the dead man's head. In the winter, under the palms of Ain Khaa, far down in the desert to the south of the Mzab, Aïsha, his widow, gave birth to a son and died.

It was Zina that reared the child, giving him suckle of she-goats, the finest sifting of *couscous,* and the meat of Deghlia dates. Once upon a time Zina had been beautiful (like her name), but now she was ugly and old. Her back was bent by burdens of fire brush and water skins. Her hair, protruding from beneath her *haik,* sparse and bright with henna, gave her face a look of peculiar ferocity. It was not fiercer than her heart.

Trudging in the dust behind the camels on the long migrations, with the infant on her back, or, later, with the little boy towing at the end of her

belt cloth, she sang him songs—queer, split-tone minor recitatives. Or under her breath at night, when the other women were asleep in the tent and the dry desert moon shining under the edges, she told him for a thousand times a story as savage and as simple as the Book of Judges.

It was one of the strangest wedding feasts, I am certain, that New York has ever known. I cannot say why they had me in to it, unless it were that I, too, had been in Africa, had looked down across their desert from the walls of Laghouat, and had slept under their stars in the deep Mzab. Or perhaps it was because I, out of all that city, remembered the words of their unwritten tongue; and it was pleasant in their ears when of a morning I stopped to exchange a greeting with Younez at the door of his rug emporium in Thirty-seventh Street, or of an evening pronounced a *"Msael-chir!"* to Moulay, who served "Turkish coffee" in a Syrian restaurant under the roar of the Third Avenue "L." Sometimes, too, on a Sunday afternoon I had gone with them to Central Park, where, half screened by the trees from the surrounding cliffs of the infidel city, they would stroll hand in hand like tall, red-capped children, after the fashion of the *souks* at home, or, for hours, sitting cross-legged on the turf and, still hand in hand, gaze out in silence over the little lake.

More than once Younez, who was the prosperous one, said to me of Moulay: "He is better than

anyone else. These people that are here in America do not know. But that Moulay, you understand, is *Cherif*—all the way back to the Prophet. His grandfather was a sheik. His father was a *caïd.* A big *caïd,* you understand, who could have a *gaum* of a hundred cavalry in front of his tent. Because in those south *douars,* where there are wilful men like the Beni Khmaïs, the French are forced to make a *caïd* powerful. If Moulay would be there, without doubt he would be *caïd.* He is better than anyone, my friend is."

Once I asked him why his friend remained here in America (where his berth in the Mecca Restaurant must have seemed humble indeed). He appeared at a loss for an answer and, having looked about him at his rug-hung walls and out of the windows in the hurly-burly of the street of infidels, he gave me the easiest one—*"Mektoub."*

After all, though, that to the mind of Islam is explanation enough. "It is written." Moulay, on his part, seldom spoke of Younez. He was not a communicative sort. He seemed always friendly enough, with the impeccable friendliness of the high-born Arab, but in his dark eyes there remained an expression of melancholy verging sometimes on the dour. Exile, I should have said, was heavy for that soul.

Once he said to me: "Younez is a smart fellow. They tell me he arrived in this country with six rugs over his shoulder, and *now* you can look at him."

Another time he said: "Once that Younez he saved my life. That was when we came to be friendly."

That was all. But that was enough. As I looked at Moulay standing there over my table, the apron around his middle, the napkin over his arm, his collar gaping under the insufficient pressure of his ready-tied Bowery bow, and his *chechia* (the round red "fez" which of all the garments of the Faithful is the last to go) tilted on the shining black hair that framed a face as near as there remains in the world to the beauty of the old Greek —as I saw him there in the gaslight, amid the clatter and slang of the feeders, the grinding of trains outside the window, the far off sirens of steamers and all the million-tongued shouting of the city—I seemed to know the whole story of how this huge, heaped, incoherent agglomeration of sound had driven together those two solitary exiled children of silence and space.

And so, too, I could understand a little what it was going to mean to both of them, when I first heard of Moulay's approaching nuptials. For if a woman amounts to nothing in the social life of the Arab in his own land, here it could not be quite so. First, and not least, they would have to give up the room they had shared in common for the past two years. Moulay, I learned, had taken a place in a tenement block in one of the side streets that run off from West Broadway below Bleecker, and was furnishing it from an installment house—

"all new stuff"—in a manner worthy of the habitation of the daughter of the master, the Syrian restaurateur.

I saw part of it on the evening of the wedding day. I saw the dining suite, and it was indeed new. The "golden" varnished "oak" shone with the refulgence of a dozen Sahara suns. It was not exhibited to the best advantage, however, for to the last chair it had been pushed back against the walls, so as to leave the rug (the gift of Younez, and worth three times all the furniture in the house) bare for the feast.

We sat cross-legged on that rug under the pressed-glass chandelier of three bulbs, five of us: the groom, Younez, the Syrian father-in-law, an Egyptian lad whom I understood to be a messenger at the British Consulate and whose name I did not catch, and myself. The bride, as was proper, remained but a rustle in the darkness of the adjoining chamber or, from time to time, especially as the evening advanced, the faint luminosity of an eyeball hanging in the black aperture of the door.

There was a humor about that, ironic and at the same time wistful. Any day in the past five years, any luncher or diner at the restaurant in Third Avenue had been at liberty to feast his eyes to satiety on the beauty of that young woman seated behind the cash register beside the door. Day after to-morrow it would be much the same. But now, for an hour out of life, there was the

illusion that no man had ever looked upon her unveiled face, and that no man but her husband ever would. And so, after the ancient custom, she must remain in the dark there alone (since no Moslem woman had been found for her fête), watching us, the lords (from whom she had collected quarters and half-dollars in plenty), with a peeping, patient, faintly luminous eye.

I do not know where the dinner came from. The Syrian had arranged for it, but certainly not in his shop. It was brought in by a boy, the son of a Bleecker Street hide-handler from Oran, whose wife, perhaps, had prepared it. It was extraordinarily near to the real thing.

We made our ablutions in an "installment" washbowl done in peonies, with a lather of drug-store soap. All together we murmured *"Bism illah!"* and with our right hands dipped our bread into the sauce of the *mechoui*. We accepted from our host choice muscles which he tore from the mutton's shoulder-blade with his slender, strong, white fingers. We ate green peas out of the hollows of our palms, and with our little fingers stirred the bowls of buttermilk before we drank. All together we fished for hearts of artichokes in a basin of lamb fragments. Then there were meat balls swimming in *merga*. Then there were prunes stewed in the juice of meat.

Meat! Meat! One may grow drunk on meat eaten with the hands. We dined in silence. Of the five I was the only "infidel," the only one not

an inheritor of the conquering Saracens. And yet among them mine was the only common tongue.

I suppose, in the hour of illusion, the crude, half-got new language must have had an insufficient taste in their mouths, and for the main part we were dumb. Even when the *couscous* had arrived, in the guise of dessert, sweetened and full of raisins—even when the coffee had gone around —in the hour when the soul of the East is uplifted with well-being and its tongue awag with its beloved philosophical platitudes—even then we continued to recline there on our propping elbows in silence, dreaming under the bizarre sunshine of the three bulbs in the pressed-glass chandelier.

The smell of spiced food was heavy about me. I saw a young woman in the shadow of a black tent, her fingers red with henna and redder still with the glow of the fire under a *marmite* that sent up a steam of *merga* about her from moment to moment like a hesitant veil. Her eyes were very beautiful. But they were turned to the west. Against the flame of the sunset the camels and horsemen came down in a crimson troop.

I breathed a perfume of coffee. And I saw before me my friend, Mohammed ben Abdallah, of Tlemcen, son and grandson of the *agars,* the chieftains of the border. He came toward me through the sun and shadow of his gallery, his big hand extended. And the negress behind him bore a silver tray with little cups. . . .

I did not realize that I was dreaming till the

nameless Egyptian got up to go. I would not have believed so potent an illusion possible in that hard, near light, flanked by that unspeakably golden "oak," and bustled about by the night noises of the city—the roll of truck on pavement, the penetrating scream of iron wheels on rails, the quarreling of air shafts—not till all of it came back around me with a crash at the stirring of the Egyptian.

I blinked across at Moulay and Younez. Both their faces, so alike in the thin, soft contour of their features, were as white as parchment. Their eyes were dull. On the foreheads I saw a film of sweat.

"What has happened?" I wondered. "What time is it getting to be?"

It was late. The Syrian, too, had taken his leave. I, who should properly have been the first to go, bestirred myself. But Younez put out a hand, murmuring: "Stay a minute. I am going with you."

He made no immediate move. They continued to recline there, the two of them, brooding empty-eyed at the five coffee cups lost on the desert of the rug. . . . It came to me that I knew nothing whatever about those men; that no Westerner at all could fathom anything of what was passing in the hearts of those exiles on this night of a peculiar parting.

The lateness of the hour oppressed me. I glanced at the door crack into the adjoining chamber, but the eye was no longer there. I could no

longer hear even a rustle. What I heard was the slow breathing of one who slept. . . . I moved again. I got to my knees.

"Stay! Just a little. I am going with you!"

But this time I did not relapse. Younez had to arouse himself, it seemed with pain. We went out into the entranceway and put on our things. Moulay followed us.

"Ebqa-'ala-chir!" I said, taking his hand.

"And thou," he echoed, "rest in the well-being!"

Younez bent to kiss his shoulder.

"Mabrouk, habiby!" . . . "Good luck my friend!"

"Go with my salutations!" Moulay gave us the formula of parting as we stepped out on the landing in the dark. He stood in the doorway behind us, a black, bright-edged silhouette against the interior radiance of his new home. Younez, turning on the first step, pronounced the formula of the one who departs:

"Ti-sba-'ala-chir!"

When we had got down the three flights into the street he turned back and, staring at the doorway from which we had emerged, repeated the words in a tone of the most singular abstraction.

"Ti-sba-'ala-chir!"

In the spoken Arabic of Barbary it means, *"Till the morning, peace!"*

We walked into West Broadway and north toward Washington Square. At the corner where the street meets the square Younez paused.

"This place is where Moulay and I were first friends. Standing right here, like you and me."

I nodded in grave appreciation of that event.

"This night," said I, "means something to you, Si Younez."

His attention came to me with a quick shift of pupils, like a lizard at the alert. I thought he was going to speak, but after a moment's vacillation he closed his lips and started off at a strong pace across the square. I caught step with him. He walked faster. He had taken a room in the Bronx, and for one wild moment, seeing his determined gait, I had the notion that he was going to walk to it at that hour of the night. And then in the center of the square he halted as abruptly as he had started and sat down on a bench. I took the place beside him.

The square was dead. If there were any in it besides ourselves they were asleep, stretched on the benches in the twilight made by many little lamps.

They say an Arab's expression is inscrutable. There are moments when it is anything but that. The muscles of Younez's cheeks were relaxed. His lip hung down. On his brow in the dimness I remarked again a film of perspiration. When two or three minutes of silence had passed he spoke.

"You said this night means something to me. Well, it does. I have been waiting for this night my whole life since I was a child."

"I don't understand. What do you mean, then, by 'this night'?"

"This night. When Moulay got married."

"Still I don't understand. You haven't known Moulay ——"

"I have known him, to hear of him, since I was that high." He held a hand thirty inches above the pavement.

"And Moulay? Then Moulay has known ——"

"Moulay has not ever known me. Never in his life. Never!"

My mystification took the form of silence. After all, there was nothing to do but wait. While I waited he took from his pocket a half-pint flask of whisky and after studying it for a moment at arm's length, offered the thing, as if with an afterthought of politeness, to me.

"Do you know," I said, shaking my head, "I always had the idea, Younez, that you were the stoutest of the Faithful."

"I always was. You must believe me, I have not ever tasted of it. Only, I have heard men say it makes anybody forget."

"What do you want to forget? See here, now, I don't believe your friend's marriage is going to make so much difference as you think."

"It is not that thing."

He drew the cork from the flask and filled his mouth deliberately with the liquor. It was a most cold-blooded act. The stuff gagged him a little,

but he managed to swallow. The effect, as might be expected, was powerful. After a moment of coughing his eyes cleared and the laxness of his face muscles was gone.

"It is not that thing, that I should lose my friend to a wife. It is this other thing. It was on the morning after he got married, my father—it was that day he was killed by the father of this Moulay here."

I had a sudden desire to laugh. I looked around at the walls of New York. I looked at the cross hanging in the sky over the Memorial. I heard the trains running in the sky of Sixth . . . and with it all I had sense enough to realize that it was no laughing matter.

Younez had taken another of those cold-blooded gulps.

"This is all nonsense!" I burst out. "Worse than nonsense. It is child's talk! You're not in Africa, and neither is Moulay. You're in America, both of you, and you are friends. *Friends!*" My eyes went back to the tower of the Memorial. "And the religion of America says that you must forgive even your *enemies*."

"My religion says, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'"

It sounded in a vague way familiar.

"Yes, but even there, Younez! It was Moulay's father, not Moulay. What could *Moulay* possibly have had to do with it? Say!"

"I do not know anything of this religion of

Sidna Aïssa. My religion says that the sins of a father go down to the children, even to the third or the fourth generation."

It was uncomfortable. It was as if he had taken an unfair advantage in his innocence, getting me back unblushingly to the Lord God of Moses, of Mohammed, and of Christ. . . . I shook myself.

"This is nonsense, Younez! Drivel! Nonsense!"

He sat hunched forward a little, brooding into the crisscross of all the little lamps. The whisky had done its work; it had made him forget. But it had made him forget the wrong things. He had forgotten New York. He had forgotten the language of the New World. When he broke the silence it was in a tone of strong reverie. His mind had reverted and his speech had taken on the rich and melodious dignity of his own desert tongue; once again I heard the soft gutturals of the *"Aïn"* and the *"Kaf,"* the throat letters we do not know.

"I have not forgotten the night," he said, "when my cousins Abdallah, Abdelkader, and Houssein made ready to ride to Aïn Khamsa and the encampment of the Beni Khmaïs. They had the intention of assassinating Belgasem that night, for it was the dark of the moon. There was a rushlight in the men's side of my grandmother's tent where they were gathered. I have not forgotten the glow on the gun barrels and their beards. I was

then a boy of twelve. And I have not forgotten how Zina, my grandmother, pushed me toward Abdallah and cried: 'But here is Younez. Thou must take him with thee, Abdallah. I have sworn, and it is written, that he should witness to the death of Belgasem ben Fredj. And look thou, he is now the height of a man.'

" 'He is but a boy,' said Abdallah, shaking his head. And the others grumbled: 'Wilt thou hearken to the words of a woman, Abdallah?'

"But Zina was not as other women. No man among the Ouled Zab was able to look in her eyes for the space of three breaths, and often when she spoke her words were in the measure of verse. Her spirit was strong. So at last they took me out and lifted me up behind Abdallah's saddle. I have not forgotten the warmth of the mare's coat between my knees, nor the sound of the women whispering of me in the tents, nor the barking of the dogs, nor the sight of the sky powdered with stars, nor the pounding of my heart. Abdallah was up before me. Abdelkader and Houssein were in their saddles. The horses' hoofs rang and made sparks on the stones.

"And then came one of our family who had been with the herders to the west. He said: 'There is this news. Belgasem, the *caïd* of the Beni Khamaïs, is dead of a stomach fever, and the *Roumi* captain from Ghardaia is come to Aïn Khamsa to name the new *caïd*.'

"My grandmother did not return with the others

into the tent. She took my hand when I was put down from the mare and led me beyond the encampment. She led me far away over the sharp stones of the desert, and I heard her hissing under her breath: 'He is gone, then! He has cheated us with this easy death among his women! He has mocked us and left us with empty hands!'

"She led me farther and farther through the night till we had come where we could no longer hear even the barking of the dogs. Then she began to speak, lifting her face toward the stars, and her speech was in the measure of verse. She recounted, as if it were a tale intoned by a poet in the market place, the life of her son, my father. She told his birth, the pains of his bearing in the tent crowded with women who watched and made a '*You-you-you-you*' in chorus when they saw that the child was a son. She told the marches when she carried him on her back, and the stops at the water places where she gave him suck. She told his babyhood, when he rolled in the sunshine before the tent; of his boyhood, when he chased lizards with the other lads and built men of rock on the hilltops to kill with stones. And of his youth, when he went with the herds, and came back to her each season taller by a hand. And of his betrothal. And of his marriage, when the women danced and the horsemen made a fantasia to the sound of drums and powder. Of his marriage night. Of the morning, the shot, the body covered with blood.

"I had heard it a thousand times. The words ran into a dream and I slept there on the stones with my head in Zina's lap. When I awakened it was gray with morning. A man had come and was talking with Zina. I saw it was the man who had brought the news of Belgasem's death and was now setting out on his return to the herds. I caught these words:

"But *ai,* surely, Zina, he hath left a son. He is a lad of a dozen years and he is called Moulay. I have seen the lad.'

"The man went on his way. The sun was at the horizon. Zina looked down and saw that I was awake.

" 'Didst thou hear then, my Younez?'

" '*Ai,* I heard.'

" 'Allah is merciful. It is written that the law shall be fulfilled. It is written that thou shalt recover the price of thy father's blood in the veins of his slayer's first-born.'

"The world was red. The birds sprang from the rock brush and flew into the sky and sang. In Zina's eyes there was an expression of joy.

" 'It is written,' she cried, 'it is written, oh Younez, that Moulay ben Belgasem shall pay, even as thy father was struck, on the morrow of his first marriage, at dawn. . . . Swear, Younez!'

"And in the light of the new day, by the Beard of the Prophet, by the Eternal Bliss of Sidi Abdelkader, by the Hope of Moulay Saá, and by the head of M'barek, my father, I swore.

"I have not forgotten that.

"And I have not forgotten the day when the news came that the white hearts among the Beni Khmaïs had gained the council and that Moulay was to be sent away—far away, the tidings said, across the sea of France. I have not forgotten Zina then. She was like a lioness let abroad in the camp. She demanded, and at every tent they gave: a horse here, a mule harness there, twenty *duoros* in gold from the *caïd,* and a new woven rug from each of twenty looms. At Zina's bidding I got on the horse, the rugs were thrown over a mule, Zina mounted another (for she was not like women), and together we rode. We rode three days, she and I, and she was never tired. We came to a *ksar* called Sidi bou Sif, which is on the road to the north. There in the house of Zina's cousin we waited. On the following day men of the Beni Khmaïs came through the village, riding from the south. We spied on them from the housetop. The cousin of Zina pointed out Moulay, riding with an old man in the lead. Zina held my arm and pressed it with a strong grip.

" 'Look well, Younez! Look thou well!'

"When they had gone she kissed me on the forehead, the shoulder, and the heart, saying: 'Thou wilt return to the tents of thy family when it is done. Ride now, with the blessing of God.'

"So it was, riding the horse and leading the mule that bore the rugs, that I set out to follow Moulay ben Belgasem. I have followed him from that

day till now. I shall not forget the cities I have known. There was a city called Cannes by the sea of France. Moulay went there. He had a store of money and lived like a rich man. I put the rugs over my shoulder and stood on the stone road that follows the shore, offering them to the passers for sale. All the while I watched Moulay as the female of the gazelle watches the coming and going of her fawn. I saw him spending his money with freedom at cafés and with the women of the public. My heart was sad. I saw him each day go into the great stone *dar* beside the sea where men put their money on the hazard of a turning wheel, and each day when he came out again I saw a frown in his eyes, and my heart was sadder still. For I said to myself: 'He is a fool. His money will soon be gone, and how will he then be able to buy for himself a wife?' And my exile was long.

"From that city he went to Paris, where there is a broad highway with an arch, a river that never dries, and a maroquinerie shop kept by a Mussulman from Tunis. Paris is the capital of the French race, and there lives their emperor, Napoleon, who built the bridge at El Kantara above Biskra on the road to Constantine. Moulay continued to live in pleasure, but his pleasure was less because his money was less. Day by day I saw the coming of his poverty and in my heart I tasted bitterness. 'Now he cannot buy a wife.' It was like the laugh of God (to whom be the

prayer). For as he lost I gained in prosperity. The people of Paris saw that my rugs were good and they bought them willingly at the heaviest price I wished to ask. When they were gone I wrote to my family asking more rugs. But it was not the letter of a mendicant, however, for in it I placed a *mandat* for two hundred *douros* gold. And in my fortune my heart despaired, for his fortune was gone and he had no girl to marry. I said to myself, however: 'Perhaps now he will return to his home.' And for that I waited.

"One day he was gone from Paris. In my gladness I almost leaped. Then I went to a certain Mussulman who was in my confidence and I asked, 'Has he set out then on his return?' And the man said: 'No, he has gone still to the north. He has left to go on a ship to New York.'

" 'Where is New York?' I asked.

" 'It is so far distant that it is where the world bends down on the other side under the sky. It is too far for thee to follow.'

"For a moment then the blackness lifted from my spirit. It seemed an absolution. I said to myself: 'Now I shall see my land again and the tents of my people. Now again I shall put my hand into the dish with friends and hear the voices of them who were my comrades long ago.'

"I went back to the room where I lived. There I found a letter. It was from the *caïd* of my people. It said: 'Zina, thy father's mother, still

lives (that the praise and prayer be to God). She is beyond the years when a woman should die, but she remains. It is said that Zina will live till the day thy work is done, for in her spirit there is a *djinn* which will support her till that day when she may bury the head of M'barek with his bones. . . . Each day, oh, Younez, there is with thee the prayer and the hope of thy tribe. . . .'

"It was then that I came to America. I have not forgotten the terrible days on that sea when I was forced to make my ablutions in a dish common to *Roumi* and Jews. Nor have I forgotten the loneliness of this city in the months after my coming. It is a thing which I might express if I were a poet able to sing the tragedy of a soul that is lost. Hast thou ever seen the cub of a hyena the hunters have slain, how it runs here and there among the rocks that have become strange and large, how it runs and runs, whispering, always in the same orbit, till it is exhausted, and then how it continues to creep on its belly in the same orbit till it can creep no longer and dies?

"Sometimes I laughed in bitterness, saying: 'This is not a *ksar;* this is a great *bled,* a country, a nation living in one town. How should I look to discover one man in a nation?'

"The time grew long. I became dull. I began to forget my land and the faces of my people. I began to forget even Moulay ben Belgasem. I was like a stone walking among stones. And all

the while I prospered. I became a 'business man.' I neglected to make my ablutions before prayer. I neglected to pray. I was dead.

"One day there was a fantasia with drums and trumpets in this square. It was full of people. I came along that street. Before me, standing on the pavement of the street, I saw Moulay. A hospital automobile was rushing around that corner. It made a sound with its bell, but the music of the fantasia was in Moulay's ears. He would have been overrun. I leaped forward and drew him back.

"We stood there without breath, and still I held his hand. The thought went through my brain: *'I have saved his life! I have saved my enemy's life! The curse of Allah on me!'* My stomach felt strange. I saw Zina and all my tribesmen standing there looking at me. *'I have saved his life!'* It kept running in my brain. His eyes were on me, but I could not look.

"He took his hand away and put his fingers to his lips. He said, 'Thou other Mussulman, what art thou doing in this city?'

"I could not answer. My knees trembled.

" 'This city of sound without meaning and agitation without goal is no good place for thee, nor for me,' he said.

"He spoke in the tongue of the desert that I had not heard so long, and it was as if a kiss had been laid on my ears. I could not keep my eyes from weeping, and we were friends."

The narrator paused. The whisky was going out of his head. His shoulders drooped.

"Thou wilt wonder how I could be friendly with that one, the enemy of my tribe, the son of my father's murderer."

"No," I said, "I don't wonder at all."

"He is a good man, this Moulay. We have been like two brothers walking arm in arm through an enemy's country. Often when my spirit has been dull his speech has brought back to me the scenes and the people of my boyhood. A comfort had come into my heart. We have spoken together of the gallant horsemen, of the camel coursers of the white desert, of the fires that burn at evening in the encampments under the palms beside the sweet waters. Together we have performed our ablutions and gone on the housetop to pray with our faces to the east. I was a stone walking among stones and he has made me again a creature alive.

"And all the time there has been this blackness on my soul. I knew him and I knew myself. He knew himself but he did not ever know me. Once I asked him in despair: 'Why are you here? Why are you not at your home?' He answered: 'Because some men of my tribe are jealous, I think. They are afraid I will be *caïd*, and they themselves wish to be *caïd*.' The shame of my heart's cowardice I grew to bear, but this other thing has been intolerable. When I have hearkened to him breathing in sleep beside me; when I have seen him watching me for a long while in our room

with his eyes half closed, as though he strove to penetrate my soul—then it has been as if I were burned with flames. I have writhed. I have been in hell, to think that he loved me and did not know. I have opened my mouth to cry. Then the shame of the Ouled Zab came upon me, and all I could cry was: *'Ana habibek!'* . . . I am thy friend!' "

His voice broke off again. For a moment he sat dreaming at the pavement.

"Ana habibek," he repeated it, his voice no higher than a whisper.

He began to rub his eyes with his knuckles. Now he was like a man waking up in the morning out of a long and troubled sleep. And indeed the morning was at hand. He came back abruptly into English.

"What do I want to talk about those things for? You would think I was a fool. You would think I was one of those ignorant immigrants."

It seemed to me that I ought to know what to say. Certainly if the iron were ever to be hot for striking, it was now. And yet I hadn't the word. All I could do was stare at the silhouettes of the trees and the high cliff of buildings in the east standing out blacker from moment to moment against the vague grayness of the coming dawn. The city stirred. The huge, robust, vital body of the west moved in its bed. A dynamic current ran in the air. And presently I became aware that it had entered into the soul and body of my companion.

"Confess, and thou shalt be made whole!" It had been a queer sort of confession, that Odyssey of the sinless life of Younez, but somehow the simple act of putting it into words for another's ears had been cathartic, and the man wept.

He struck the tears away with a kind of ferocity. He squared his shoulders. For the first time there was something in his attitude electric and challenging.

"I am a fool!" he said. "Where am I? I am in America. Where is my grandmother? She has been dead two years. And those Ouled Zab? Look here, I do more business in one month than those native people do in a year. They are too ignorant. They do not know anything about the world at all. They are afraid to say they will do anything without saying also: 'If God is willing.' . . . God! Always it's God."

He got to his feet suddenly and threw out his chest.

"God! Allah! But how can there be a God when a man can talk five thousand miles? How can there be a God, when I know Christians, and Jews, too, as good as any man?"

He took off his *chechia,* the symbol of the faith, and cast it on the ground. The new wind rocked him like a reed in the morning.

"How can there be a God when the son of M'barek is ready to give his life down for the son of Belgasem ben Fredj?"

At last I found a voice.

"Why don't you tell him, Younez? Why not kill the curse for good and all and tell him?"

He looked around at me with scared eyes like a boy. And almost immediately there had come on his face an expression of peace.

"Now?" he breathed. The drama of it took hold of him visibly. "This morning? On this *morning of the day after his marriage!*" His cheeks puffed out. He waved an oratorical hand that brought tears to my ears. *"That,"* he cried, *"is America!"*

He took both my hands and shook them up and down. He had escaped the years. He turned abruptly and walked away at a great stride to the south, toward the new home of Moulay ben Belgasem, his friend.

There is a saying among men who know the Barbary coast of Africa, "Weep for the Arab who changes his coat." I thought of that, and I laughed it away with the triumph of the child of the Light that is in the West. As the figure of Younez disappeared into the deeper mists of West Broadway, I gazed around me at the great city of the dawn and I said aloud: "The God of the man who talks five thousands miles is awake. Allah sleeps!"

In the close air of the bedchamber the "tick" of the "installment" alarm clock continued sharp and insistent in Moulay's ear. It was like water boring drop by drop into his brain. Finally he

opened his eyes. Under the window shade there was the faintest line of gray light. He closed his eyes again. But he could not shut out the "tick, tick, tick" of the clock. He opened his eyes again, took a deep breath into his lungs, and slid out of bed.

The head on the other pillow lifted, tousled and half awake.

"What you doing? Where you going to?"

"Nowheres."

Moulay lay back again on the bed and remained motionless. When the other's breathing had taken on once more the slow, measured rise and fall of the sleeper he began to edge himself over the bedside inch by inch. Once on the floor he set about dressing himself. He desisted bathing his hands and face in the washbowl, taking the utmost care against the drip of water; he got down on the carpet, prostrated himself with his face to the east, and prayed briefly. Then he finished dressing. After he had put on his *chechia* he felt in his coat pocket to make sure that the paper he needed was there. He even took it out and examined it in the thin filtration of light under the shade. It was a third-class ticket good for passage on the steamship *Tuscany,* sailing for Naples *via* Gibralter and Algiers. He replaced it in his pocket, took up a canvas suitcase, packed and hidden between the commode and the wall, and, turning his back on the bed and the sleeper, went on tiptoe out of the room.

In the outer hall the stairs were dark. It was on the second flight down that they began to seem long. The bag in his hand grew heavy. On the last flight it became so heavy that he had to pause for a moment and set it down. A singular weakness invaded all his muscles. He lungs contracted. The blood pounded in his ears, so that the whole stair well seemed to resonate like the interior of a drum.

After a moment that was gone. The strength came back to his muscles and breathing was easy again. He took up the bag, completed the descent of the stairs, and opened the street door for a few inches without any sound, letting in a streak of the mist-gray light of the morning. Then for a space of perhaps two minutes he waited, standing as he was, with his left hand on the knob, motionless save for the pupils of his eyes.

The moment of physical perturbation had passed. Now it was the turn of the mental. His brain took panic. His brain begged his hand to close the door. But his hand did not obey. After a few seconds that too was gone, leaving his faculties abnormally tranquil and keen.

As he peered into the street the first thing to take his attention was an empty rubbish can standing in the gutter directly before the door. Had it been there the night before? His memory engaged deliberately with that problem. His memory had the story of the desert tumbleweed which his father, Belgasem, had brought up from the

dry river to give him shelter before M'barek's tent. A rubbish can would do for that when there was no desert tumbleweeds. . . . Had it been there the night before? Yes? No? No, he could not remember that it had.

His right hand went back to his hip pocket, drew out quietly the revolver he had bought the day before in Third Avenue, and raised it to the level of his eye. He aimed at the rim of the can. He was quite cool. His hand trembled a little; he dropped it for a moment to give it blood and tried again. He aimed this time at the middle of the can.

Now he was interrupted and a little startled by a sound coming from another quarter. There was a light sound of feet. He put his eyes swiftly to the plane of the door and peered along the street toward the right. He saw the figure of Younez advancing upon him in the faulty light.

"Hallouf ben hallouf!" he breathed, and his heart sang. "Son of a pig, son of the swine litter of the Ouled Zab. To think, then, that thou couldst come for reprisal on the head of a Beni Khmaïs in such way, walking without a stick to cover thy hide!"

And swinging the door open, he fired swiftly and he fired straight.

He picked up the bag and walked down the steps. There he stood for ten seconds, watching the obscure huddle on the sidewalk. When it did not move at the end of that time he spat on the

barrel of the revolver, blew out the smoke, and flung the thing over a neighboring wall. There began to be an alarm of voices and feet. He stepped into the areaway, walked to the rear of the building, vaulted quietly over a wooden fence and came into an alley that led straight.

There is a very old proverb in the Arabic, "He that hideth his secret attaineth his end."

FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SOUTH

THE day had been dead hot. Under the weight of the afternoon one would have thought it could never be cool again in the Mzab. But immediately the sun had dipped behind the cliff that guards the western rim of the oasis the thin air emptied itself, and the night chill, penetrating and treacherous, flowed over the dry bottom of the *oued*.

The town stirred. Under my gallery there came and went a word fight between Berber muleteers from the north. After that I heard the evening call of the muezzin dropping down from the mosque tower on the crowded hill, arid, sinuous, like the note of another wooden well-wheel shrilling above the desert floor. Then somewhere under a house arose the hollow voice of a tambour struck with a thumb, and a man sang. In a rift of silence a wandering breeze threshed all the date fronds in the *oued* bottom with a fantom of distant applause. Nearer at hand a foot-scuffle in the dusk. A choked laugh. And all around in the heavy shadows of that quarter the subdued giggling, the rustling, and jewel-clanking of the women of dark delight.

"What's wrong with the Ouled Naïl girls to-

night?" I asked along the gallery. Abd, son of Abdallah the Mozabite, rose to his feet on the tiles near the stair, a white wraith.

"Kain kairouan ja, sidi." ("There is a caravan come.")

Drums banged; women scurried. The momentous night was established and stars sprinkled the sky, large and restless stars, always flickering a little to the eye in that air without body.

I sat at an island crossroads of the western Sahara, where the pale, blurred sand courses, like the wakes of ships, come up the bald skin of the globe from the green mysteries that lie months away on the other side of the south.

"Abd!" I called, "where does the caravan come from, east or west?"

Abd was gone. On the tiles I heard the fall of a Christian boot. Borak, the Englishman, came toward me in the shadows.

"I wonder you're not out," he said. "The caravan comes from the south."

"Not ——"

"Rather! This is a real one—like the old days again. Right away up from under. You'd better have a look at the beggars; you're romantic, you know. Might not have another chance in a year."

I put on my coat and went with him. Borak has been too long in Africa, one part and another. He has forgotten that it is the Dark Continent. As we walked he went on in his habitual vein of banter.

"It's a tidy lot of heroes for you. You may imagine. Seven 'moonlights' on the trek, and I lay a pound sterling not a man in the crowd has washed in the thirty weeks."

"Thirty weeks!" I couldn't help echoing it. "Lord!"

"There ought to be a story there, eh? As a matter of fact there isn't. I insist again that there's more story, more poetry and romance in the life of a Whitechapel coster than you'll hear in a year listening to these people. They lack imagination. They want the mental whip of civilization; that's it in a nutshell."

I felt like saying "Bosh!" Borak is too dogmatic.

We were passing into the thick of the "low town," and on our right loomed the ugly oblong of the *douane,* the French custom house that stands at the converging of the deep-Sahara routes. Borak looked at it and chuckled.

"Old Arnauld" (the customs official) "is in a fair pother. There's a frightful mixture in the trek, blacks and browns from a dozen different basins down below, and you may imagine there's a lack of passports. So that's Arnauld's job; to divine. Or rather it's Bou Dik's job, for the orderly has all the work. When I passed the market coming to you, Bou Dik was tackling an old chap who claims to be Senegal but looks away east of that, a pot-bellied old swine, black as a chimney pot, solemn as an archbishop, and blind

as a bat. I gather all he wants is to be let pass quietly on his way to Holy Mecca, where he hopes to die. Bou Dik, tho, is full of wild and horrid notions. He has crossed the trail lately of a dervish man who has the word that Mouley Saa [1] is now booked to descend in the guise of a blackamoor, and naturally, having a fat berth with the Infidel, Bou Dik isn't going to let the Deliverer into *his* department—not if he can help it. So just now Bou Dik is death and leprosy on niggers. I wish you could have heard the row."

I was to hear it presently. We had arrived at a chain swung across the black street and, ducking under it, we came into the open market square. I had seen the place a hundred times, by sun and moon and stars, and still familiarity had not quite worn off my first sense of it as a haven between the winds, the anchorage of a remote white port of call lost in the ocean of stone. To-night that illusion was deepened a dozenfold. There is no other metaphor in speech so true as "ships of the desert." They were here. To-night I knew that I had known before only the small fry of that dry sea world, only the shore-huggers, the humble brotherhood of the coastwise trade. Here to-night was the creature of the main, the deep-sea squadron, the tall fleet.

From where we stood, clear to the further shore of dim arcades, the ground was hidden under the mass of kneeling beasts and heaped bales, a tum-

[1] The Napoleonic Messiah of Mohammedan prophecy.

bled thing, monstrous in sleep. We picked our way through the ruck, lighting matches from time to time when we found ourselves trapped in blind alleys between bales and humps, or felt our way barred by the hairy neck of a camel curving waist-high across the night. Mountains whisked fat tails at us; sleeping legs sprawled from beneath hills of cargo like dead men pinned under wreckage. Borak took hold of my elbow.

"This way," he said. "I hear the voice of Bou Dik."

I heard it too, impassive, obstinate. There was a small fire of brush roots throwing a glow around a ring of spectres in the center of the field of ruin. The burnous, all the same color of desert dust, might indeed have been winding sheets; the hooded faces, gaunt, bone-built, played upon by the weak and tricky illumination from beneath, might have been skulls. And in the midst of the communing dead, Bou Dik, enveloped in his red robe of authority, was the devil himself presiding.

His voice had ceased. As we settled behind him a man got to his feet on the side beyond the fire. With a gesture which had in it something of the trained orator he put back the hood of his burnous, baring his strong neck and his round, blue-black, kinky-polled negroid head.

"Thou hast demanded, *sidi,* who is this man who is the father of my father. Thou hast demanded whence he comes, whither he goes, what he desires. Now I will tell thee all these things, I, Belkano,

who am not without power in the country which is under Kalgou."

He spoke a quaint Arabic in which all the throat sounds were brought forward and softened—such a tongue, Borak told me, as black boys pick up in the Mohammedan *zaouias* at Sikasso and Timbuktu—quaint, and yet more easily understood in the Mzab than dialects not so far away, in Tunis, say, or the Moroccan uplands.

"The father of my father," he said, "is a very great and holy man."

In the pause that followed all the eyes turned upon the object deposited at the speaker's feet. It was discerned to be human.

"Black as a chimney pot, solemn as an archbishop, blind as a bat." Like many of Borak's observations, that one had everything in it but the essential. The essential thing was the man's enormous separation. Whether it was the infirmity of his great age or whether it was his "holiness" (which may account for many things), he was removed to a distance which could not be measured. He lived on another planet. He lived within another sky, the sky of his own skin.

There was something majestic in the completeness of his immobility. Save for a faint, slow, rhythmical pulse of his swollen lower lip there was nothing visibly alive in him. Not once did the dead eyeballs, sustained in little cups of rheum, shift from the line of dead ahead. From the first to the last of that audience he remained in the

attitude in which I imagine he must have been deposited, a sphinx thing in ebony, content with memories. Memories gorgeous or infernal. His lip fascinated me. I could not get my eyes away from that pendulous and extraordinary tissue, throbbing with faint, ordered convulsions in the orange light. It was as if the creature's heart, appalled by something under the black sky of skin, had broken prison and escaped so far, only to be caught on the threshold and hang there eternally, beating.

I had to shake myself. In a whisper, to Borak: "What's that he was saying? The tall one."

"He says that his grandfather is bound on the pilgrimage to Mecca because he is tremendously holy, and he is tremendously holy because he has a huge sin on his soul. Not bad, eh? It has happened before."

Bou Dik's voice was heard. "What then is that sin?"

The dark orator looked around the circle beneath him.

"It is known in Andiorou and Adar. It is known in Damagarin country and even in Manga country in the east." He looked at Bou Dik. "Now I will recount thee that history, *sidi.*"

His gaze returned to the fire. I shall not soon forget him as he stood there against the stars of the desert night, tall, glossy, vibrant, speaking out in a strong voice the story of the moribund flesh beside him.

"Know thou then that it was in the years before the missionaries of God (to whom be the prayer) and of his Prophet (be his bliss eternal by the streams that never cease!) had brought to my tribe the Word and the Flame of Islam. Glory to the One God!"

"Glory to the One God!" the echo rustled around the ring.

"In those days then the men of my people lived in darkness. They performed no ablutions. Their prayers were to images made with their hands. The strongest and bravest of the young men of that tribe was Djeba, who was later called Djim, as I will recount to thee, *sidi,* and who was to become the father of my father, and who is this man. The young man who was next to Djeba in strength and courage was Moa. These two were brothers of the milk. Of these two, each was the other's breath. When these two went into the bush to hunt, the animals said to one another, 'Strike if thou wilt among seven men, but avoid the Brothers of the Milk!' So lived Djeba and Moa in those days. Djeba was the spear of Moa; Moa was Djeba's shield.

"In those days then came a war party from the south, from the country of Gando under Sokoto, the country of braggarts and thieves. They came out of the bush in the morning and moved toward the village, casting their spears aloft and beating on drums. The warriors of my people did not fail to answer them. They advanced out of the

stockade. Nikato, the Headman, was in the forefront, and at his two shoulders went Djeba and Moa. That sunrise Djeba slew five of the sons of Gandoland. Moa slew five. Neither cut nor bruise was on their bodies. *Sing the valor of the Brothers of the Milk!"*

The apostrophe rang out, absorbed, deep-throated, across the sleeping caravan. My eyes went to the flesh on the ground. Into that dark house had those words been able to penetrate? Had their ringing set some hidden echo ringing? How could one say? The lip that was like the man's drawn heart pulsed in the same laggard, imperturbable count; the dead eyeballs did not shift. But perhaps they were dead only that they might see the better the sunlight of that vanished and heroic myth.

"Sing the valor and the victory of the Brothers of the Milk!

"That war party was beaten; its dead soiled the ground; its living fled into the bush. That day the drums were beaten in the village and muttons were killed; that night a feast was made. The young men danced and the old men made sacrifice to their images.

"But the images of those days were idolatrous and had no power over good and ill. *La illah il allah!*[1] Accordingly then it was written that the survivors of that war party, gathering again in the bush and being drunk with the desire of revenge,

[1] There is no god but God.

fell once more upon the village in the hour when the young men were full-fed and their weapons away. So in that night many of my tribe were slain. The stockades were thrown down; the houses were given to the flame. In the light of that flame many virgins were desecrated, many old men disemboweled, many children spun on spears. But those of good growth and being were taken away. Djeba and Moa were taken away.

"How can I recount to thee, *sidi*, the days of that march? Am I then another Errendi, that the words of my lamentation should fall like burning oil on a new wound? But the history is well known in all the country above the River, for my father's brother, Ahmed ben Djeba, he who had it out of the mouth of Djeba, has made it a chant at a hundred feasts and sung it under a hundred council trees. He has sung the days of that going, the weeks, each week after the other through the hotness of that bush trail. He has told the tale of the moons. In the roof of his mouth he has recalled the song of the lash that fell on those men's shoulders and made of their flesh the flesh of goats that is hung on the stockade to cure. He has stirred the dung heaps to bring in memory the meat that was given them at evening before they fell down to sleep. With his tongue he has made the clank of the chain that bound them together, the heavy chain of iron that bound together even those two who were bound by the strong bond of the breast that gave them suck!

"Many among them died. When they died their bodies were cut from the chain with swords. Djeba and Moa grew thin. When Djeba looked at Moa he saw a skeleton that he did not know. When Moa looked at Djeba he saw a thing which filled him with terror. At night each bade the other farewell, saying, 'In the morning I shall be dead.' But they were strong and they did not die. Only their minds became empty.

"Then they came at last to the banks of a great lake. This lake was so great that when they had been sold to a white boatman and when they had come out in the boat so far that they could no longer see the bank behind them, then they could yet see no bank before, and the water was all about them to the sky like the sand in the desert of Djouf. To my father's brother Djeba has recounted that they were more than the length of a moon in that going, but it must be recalled that his mind was empty, since no lake to be compared with that is in our knowledge. A wind arose on that lake and water came into the boat. They were athirst, but when they drank of that water it was sour and their thirst consumed them tenfold after. What man is there master of words sufficiently bitter to recount that going upon the lake of those men who were captive?

"Then they came at last to the other bank of that lake, and they were taken up swiftly into the bush of the country beyond, for there were war boats of other white men on the water. And on

another day they came to a great *ksar* of a hundred shelters, and in the market place of that *ksar* they were exposed for sale. They were nine. Nine men left out of sevenscore strong men! What battle in the memory of the tribes so disastrous as that going! What ambush so bloody as that march of the companions of the Brothers of the Milk!"

For a moment after the outcry the orator's lips closed over the firelit sheen of his white teeth. I suppose that he (like his paternal uncle) had recited this tropic saga a hundred times in the villages of the black south. I doubt not that at this point he had been accustomed to pause, to receive for a moment the sweet applause of a groan.

"And so," he resumed, "they were sold that day into labor. And of the Brothers of the Milk, those whose eyes saw a single thing and whose lips spoke the same, Moa was taken one way and Djeba another, and their hearts died. Djeba, the blood-child of chieftains, was driven like a bullock up into the bush by a white driver, and when his weakness grew on him and he stumbled that driver struck him with a thong.

"That country beyond the great lake is a fat country, full of planting of maize and cotton in the uplands where the bush is cleared. It is known by the name of Djoja, and in extent it lies from the banks of the lake into the interior many marches away. Djeba was taken to a certain planting and thrown into a *dar* in a stockade as great as a small

ksar. There he had the company of other captives from the River, from the Camaroun, and from the River Greater than the River in the south. Some there were who had been there so great a time that they had forgotten their own tongues and knew only the Djoja speech, and some had been born in that stockade.

"Then they were driven into the fields to labor. In this weakness the sun beat upon the head of Djeba and made him forget. Then he was driven back to the stockade, and the rain came through the thatch of the *dar* and wet his body and fever consumed his heart. But already his heart was dead; only when he slept and saw Moa in a dream did he live.

"And that driver said to him, 'How art thou called?' And he said, 'Djeba.' And the driver laughed and cried, 'That is no name for a black boy; I christen thee Djim; and Djim thou art!" And he went away, still laughing as if he had turned a word of wit. So a hate of him came into Djeba, and Djeba would have killed him, only that he was a tall, great-bodied man, and Djeba, who had been worth five warriors in his strength, was like a child in weakness now.

"That fever burned his heart and his bowels. He was given to eat of a cous-cous made of sour maize and swine flesh. Then his stomach turned over. He vomited. He said, 'Now at last I am to die.'

"But then a woman came in that *dar*. She laid

a hand on his head and called him Djim, but the hand was cool, and the anger went from his heart. She gave him milk to drink, and his pain ceased. His sickness passed. In the darkness of that shelter that woman was like the healing benignity of the moon when it has come an hour high in the east. She spoke in tones of compassion, and he was made whole.

" 'Who then is that woman?' he asked of the men, 'and how is she called?'

" 'She is Mis'us, and she lives in the *dar kebir*' (the Big House).

" 'Is she then the woman of that driver?' he asked.

"His companions laughed. 'Nay, she is the woman of Maas Djo.'

" 'Who then is Maas Djo?'

" 'Maas Djo is the Maasa, the Headman. It is his silver with which thou wert got.'

" 'Why then have I not seen this Headman?'

" 'For the reason that since thou hast come he has been gone with a war party to fight the Yankis to the north.'

" 'He has gone then to take other captives?'

" 'Nay, he has gone to save those he has got.' And then they recounted to Djeba: 'The war parties of the Yankis who come from behind the rivers of the north choke the trails. The bush never sleeps for the sound of their drums. Their torches are among the settlements. The long peace of the white men is broken; new confederations are

formed; terror is loosed abroad. The lust of booty and of blood is aflame in the Yankis. It is said that they devour babes; it is known that when they make prayer in their holy places their ablutions are performed in the blood of a lamb. Such are they!'

"Then they recounted to Djeba how Maas Djo and the other Headmen, the holders of plantings, all the young men, how they had gathered to the war drums in the trails, how they had chosen chiefs and gone away into the bush, and how the sky above them was that day the color of gore.

"And Djeba asked them, 'Which then is the stronger?' And they answered, 'The party of Maas Djo is the stronger. Mayhap even now it has driven the Yankis back across their rivers. Mayhap to-morrow he will return home!"

"But one among them who had been born into labor in that stockade in Djoja and who was now an old man said, 'Mayhap not.' That same man, who was called by the name of Moz, came into the *dar* at night and said in a low voice to Djeba, 'The Yankis are like the leaves of the pepper tree; they are small, but their number is beyond count. Hark thou well when the bush is sleeping and thou wilt hear their powder guns in the north.'

"Then Djeba hearkened, but he heard no guns. Nevertheless he sharpened his reaping tool. But he was not yet strong from his sickness.

"From time to time that woman from the *dar kebir* came to bring him sweet milk and speak in

tones of compassion. And it was written that the heart of Djeba, the son of chieftains, should grow soft and meek. But when that driver perceived Mis'us ministering to the captive's weakness he jeered with mocking laughter, and the woman cowered before it as though she had been afraid and fled away to the Big House. And Djeba's hatred of that man grew like a pain.

" 'When I am stronger I will kill him,' he said.

"So he grew stronger.

"On another night that man called Moz came in secret and said to Djeba, 'Hark thou well in the night, and before another moon has gone thou wilt hear the drums of the tribesmen of the north.' And when he saw Djeba take up his reaping tool he said, "Rather shouldst thou sing for joy. For these men here who are ignorant *niggahs* have told thee things apart from the truth. Thou hast spoken to me of thy milk brother who is called Moa, who was sold into the planting of Maas Djoj Blaak. It has come to my knowledge that Moa has fled from that planting, and with others from other plantings has gone to fight in the war parties of the Yankis, where they are received with honors. Is it probable that such men eat babes? No, Djim, I repeat to thee, these here are child-headed *niggahs,* who know not that the Yankis come to set them free out of labor in the plantings. No, Djim, rather shouldst thou sing for joy, for when thou see'st the Yankis thou wilt see thy milk brother in their train.'

"Then Djeba's heart sang for joy.

"'Again, again I shall see my brother!' he cried. 'Again our eyes shall behold one thing and our breaths shall be one!' And he said to Moz, 'Now I too will run away from the stockade and I will go to meet Moa."

"And Moz said, 'But the driver will prevent thee.'

"And Djeba said, 'No, for I will kill the driver before I go.'

"And Djeba waited, feeding his heart on the thought of Moa and on the promise of the death of that white man who had laughed.

"There came an evening when he watched and saw the driver going out of the stockade into the edge of the bush. So Djeba took up his sharp reaping tool and followed, creeping near the ground. He came near to the driver. He saw him very clearly. The driver was dressed in finery, with a hat like a deep drum fashioned of fur, and a tunic of blue cloth with buttons of silver. Djeba saw him against the light of dusk in the sky. But the driver was not alone. Mis'us was there, where she had stolen for solitude. It was she that the driver had followed, as the desert hyena slinks slavering after the lone gazel. The fear was in Djeba that if he struck the man, then the woman would give the alarm and he would be taken again. He might have struck both. But his heart was softened by the compassion of the woman, and what was written in the book of the future he was

not given yet to read. Had he known! Had he but known to strike—the driver afterward, perhaps—but the woman first.

"But while he hesitated, already it was too late. He saw the driver step forward and grasp the woman's arm, uttering words he could not understand. He saw the woman, standing quietly, turn her head and spit once and spit twice in the driver's face.

"She continued to stand quietly, like stone. But the driver flung off toward the stockade, laughing terribly in his deep chest.

"Then Djeba would have returned and awaited another chance of the man. But the thought of Moa was strong on him, and the bush was at his back. So he said to himself, 'I will return with Moa,' and he crept away.

"All that night he walked swiftly. He hid himself and slept in the day and advanced by night again. He did not know where he went, but the image and affection of his milk brother were so powerful in Djeba that it seemed he would come truly to Moa. Because of that he remained strong. His stomach was empty but his heart was fed, and he penetrated the bush with the swiftness of a panther. He would have wished to speak with others and know his way, but if he saw slaves in the fields then he saw with them a white driver, and he was afraid.

"There came a time when he saw a Senegal man working at the edge of a maize planting, and no

driver was in sight. So he showed himself, and he asked, 'where then are the Yankis?' And the man answered him, 'Go thou to Tlaanta. I know nothing, but at Tlaanta all things are known.'

" 'Where then is Tlaanta?' Djeba demanded. And the man said, 'If thou knowest not Tlaanta then indeed thou art an ignorant *niggah*. Turn thy face to the north, and at nightfall thou wilt behold a great *ksar* which is Tlaanta, which is the chief place of Djoja, where all things are known ——— ' "

("Tlaanta." Something queer was happening down in the subconscious regions of my brain. "Tlaanta, the chief place of Djoja." The equatorial forest walls were trying their hardest to topple over in my dull brain. But there was no time. I had to get back to the saga unfolding in the strong voice of the orator in that ember-lit Sahara night.)

"—And when the night fell Djeba saw before him in the sky a pillar of light. And he came on a hill and saw a great settlement in flames. And then all about him came people fleeing in confusion through the dark bush, carrying on their heads their mills and cooking pots and crying, 'The Yankis! The Yankis are come!'

"Then Djeba was glad. He went down toward burning Tlaanta. The flame was in his face and his heart was hot, and he stood and called aloud the name of his brother of the milk. But he saw no man. A lad ran out of a shelter that took

fire. Djeba caught that lad by the arm and cried, 'Where are the Yankis?' And the lad screamed 'Gone! Gone!' and he fell down with his eyes wide open, and Djeba saw that he was dead.

"And Djeba said to himself, 'If the Yankis are gone and Moa with them, then it will be his thought to lead them to that planting where I was a slave, to kill that driver and set me free.' So he turned his back on the burning *ksar*. He ran all through that night. Others ran with him; other slaves freed by the war-party's passage. They turned this way and that in the darkness, chanting the war chants of the Yankis, and their paths through the bush were ruin. In the night they pillaged and burned stockades, in the morning they marched in bands, in the afternoon they slept along the trails. But by day and by night their minds were turned with freedom, and when Djeba ran among them demanding word of Moa their answers were without sense.

"There was a night when Djeba came upon a clearing. He saw a stockade in flames. The light of those flames showed him the fields, and then he recognized that planting and his spirit leaped with joy. He said, 'Now Moa has come here seeking me, and his revenge is before my eyes!'

"And Djeba ran bounding across the fields and came into the flame of the stockade, and he called Moa's name. He shouted the war call of their tribe. He shouted the hunting call that had been

fixed between the milk brothers in the old day in the bush.

"Then it seemed to Djeba that he heard the answer to the hunting call, but in the crackling of the flames he could not say whence it came. Then he bounded on in the stockade. In that circle of fire he saw a man standing. It was a white man he had never seen. His breast was black with blood, his head hung down, and he wept. Djeba went toward him boldly.

" 'Tell me, then, where is Moa?'

"The man looked at him with dull, heavy eyes from which the tears ran down, and for answer he said, 'Where is my wife, boy? Where are my servants? I am Maas Djo. I have come home.'

"Then Djeba perceived that the man was possessed, so he did not harm him, but ran on. He leaped like a panther through all the stockade. He bounded through the wall and stood in the lighted field, and there was nothing there but his shadow. Then he ran toward the bush, and there he saw a figure. He pursued, and the figure ran into the bush, but Djeba was too swift, and overtook it, and he saw it was that woman, who crouched like a terrified gazel and watched his coming with large eyes.

"And he said, 'It is I.'

"When the woman heard that she trembled with relief and took hold of his arm and whispered, 'It is thou, Djim! I thought it was *he*. I thought thou wert that drunken monster pursuing me still!'

"When ne heard that, there came into Djeba's mind the memory and the hate of that driver. And he said, 'Where is he now?' And the woman, grasping his arm more tightly at that instant, whispered, 'Hush, thou, and hark! He comes!'

"Then near them Djeba heard the fall of feet and he saw the man advancing through the bush. He saw his shape plain and black against the glow beyond the leaves; the shape of that fur hat he remembered, in the form of a deep drum, tilted wildly; the shoulders thrust out with that tunic of silver buttons, the elbows swaggering. And he saw that the figure was drunk and lustful and that he came in cunning silence among the leaves, and he knew that the time of his revenge was at hand.

"So Djeba sprang through the leaves and caught the man's neck in his fingers. They fell down in the dark on the ground, and there they fought. But Djeba's powerful hands were about the man's throat, and the man lay quiet and breathed no more. Then Djeba went back, but the terrified woman was gone.

"Then Djeba returned across the field toward the stockade, calling Moa's name again, and in the field near the stockade he saw lying the body of a man. The man was despoiled of his clothes and naked, and his head cut three-quarters from his trunk. And Djeba looked and saw that it was that driver.

"Then Djeba said to himself, 'The night is full of infernal creatures, witches and *djinoun*. I have

slain the driver in his finery in the bush, and here he lies an hour dead and naked in the field. The night is red with devil-work.' A fear came on him and his teeth knocked together. Nevertheless he went back to the bush, laid hold of that other man's feet, and pulled him through the bush to the field, and there he looked at the face of the man he had slain.

"He looked at the face of the man he had slain!"

The syllables of the loud repetition went away across the sleeping floor of the square and played among the invisible arcades, echoes deep-toned, momentous, tragic. And in the glow of the embers I saw the lip of that oblivious clay pulsing, pulsing, with the same laggard and monotonous beat. I continued to stare at it. You may be certain now that I started. The short hairs at the back of my skull stood up and pricked the skin. For the wonder of it. Even to that Senegal orator himself the saga he repeated remained fabulous, an epic of equatorial rivers. Chanted first by son and then by grandson at a hundred feasts and under a hundred village council trees and grown into the body of mid-African legendry, not till this night had it come to ears that heard; to eyes that saw with the eyes of that ancient, moribund, blind, black wanderer. For now I knew that I had heard the tale of that incendiary night on a "Djoja planting" before, not once, but many, many times; not in the glow of a Sahara camp fire, but in the ember-

light of a Hancock County chimney nook, where my own grandmother Peyton used to sit before bedtime thirty years agone, reciting a saga of her own.

The narrator's voice was heard again, rushing, staccato.

"Then Djeba ran through the bush to find that woman, his one thought that he might now slay her too. For he perceived now that she must be a witch doctress, thus by compassion to have blinded his eyes. He ran with all his power. How long he ran, what man can say? Sometimes he seemed to see that woman as a shadow in the bush before him and sometimes as a bird flying before him through the trees. In him there was no hunger save the hunger for her killing, no thirst save the thirst for her blood, no weariness save the weariness of the damned soul.

"And then there was a time when it seemed to Djeba that he was in the midst of many men. He saw that they were white men and that they moved in a thousand ranks. Ruin lay behind them and thunder ran around. And he remembered the words of Moz: 'The Yankis are like the leaves of the pepper tree; they are small, but their number is beyond count.' And when the nights came Djeba saw their camp fires, and even their fires were beyond count.

"A forgetfulness came on Djeba. He ran from fire to fire, crying, 'Where is Moa?' And those men mocked him, saying, 'Moa what?' But Djeba

screamed at them and ran on. Or sometimes they named him *Samboh,* saying, 'Hold *Samboh.* Sit down with us now and sing!' Then Djeba thanked them, and sat down with them and sang, and the war chant of the Yankis filled the sky.

"And after many days Djeba came with the war-party to the banks of that lake, and there he beheld a bearded chieftain sitting on a horse, and he fell down on his face and wept. And he implored, 'That I come again to my own country beyond this water, where Moa, my brother, has returned, and where he awaits me in the village of my tribe!' And that chieftain heard.

In after days then was Djeba placed in a boat, together with many of the River and the Cameroun, and he returned across that lake where the waters lay to the sky like the sands in the desert of Djouf. Then they made a village on the shore. But Djeba left them. He penetrated the bush through which he had marched many years before, bound to that chain. He penetrated the country of enemies and he passed through. Then Djeba came to his own village again. There were old men there who knew him when he spoke his name. They rejoiced and made a feast. All night they feasted. And one of the old men said to Djeba, 'Moa, thy brother of the milk, was taken with thee. Where then is Moa?'

"And Djeba said, 'I do not know.' And he took none of the feast.

"And in the years afterward, when Djeba had

taken wives and got sons, there came into our country the missionaries of God (to whom be the prayer) and of his Prophet (may his bliss never decrease) ——

"La illah il allah!

"And they spoke the word of the Koran to Djeba, and Djeba's heart turned in his breast. And he said then, 'My heart can no longer contain a lie. Hark all to the truth. Moa, my brother of the milk—which bond is sacred—Moa, my brother, him I slew with my own hands in that land which is beyond the great water. I slew him, being tricked by a witch woman. And that witch woman I was not able to slay! That then is my sin!'

"That then is the sin of Djeba. I have spoken, I, Belkano, who am the son of his son!"

In the hush that followed that deep-toned verbal signature my breath whistled small in my throat.

"Lord! Lord! Oh, my Lord!"

Borak eyed me with a smirk and a grunt. The black fellow showed his shining teeth again. He took another breath into his lungs.

"For the length of thirty Ramadans the father of my father has not opened his mouth to any man in speech. Because of that sin, because he would not look at any man, his eyes have become blind. He would not hear, and his ears are deaf. Thus men know that he is holy. So they come for many marches to touch his hand. Sometimes then his

lips are opened, and for their ears he will sing again that war chant of the Yankis. And then those men will give him offerings against his pilgrimage, that he may see Holy Mecca and ease him of that sin and die ——"

The voice was rising.

"They give him offerings of broad copper! They throw down pieces of silver before him! *They throw down gold!*"

I heard the wind going out of Borak's chest at that; an obscure thoracic collapse. A snort.

"At last! At last the plot unfolds. Now the old bird will render that popular ditty entitled 'The Unwritten War Song of the Wild Yankis of Yankishland,' and the company will contribute. And strangely enough the ringmaster's eye is fastened unerringly on *you*."

"For God's sake, man ——"

"Yes, but you'll see," he persisted. "You'll note that his toe even now is prodding the old one in the ribs."

It was true. I saw the nudging and peremptory toe. I stared at that lip hanging in the ember-light. I behld a disorder and quickening of that fleshy pulse. I heard an obedient sound issuing forth. It was a very small, shallow, creaking sound. It emerged from that emotionless mask of senility; it rose and fell in mechanical lengths of tone like a bent wire and went away and was lost in the night of the packed Sahara square. It was a queer chant.

"Cock and bull!" grunted Borak.

"For God's sake, man, hush!"

I stared and I listened. Yes, it was a very queer chant indeed. The short hairs were beginning to stand up again at the back of my skull.

On the ground, red with the firelight, a copper sou was tossed. I saw another fall, and another. I took out my wallet and found a hundred-franc note, and I let it flutter into the circle over the shoulder of Bou Dik.

Borak got hold of me.

"*Lord!* I say, now! What's *that* for?"

"To help and ease him of that 'sin.'"

"But my dear simple chap—all that rigmarole ——"

"Of the greatest of all African wars ——"

He tilted his head at me with the absurdest suspicion about my wits.

"Come away!" he said.

I got up and went with him out into the black ruck of the camels. He was groaning audibly over that squandered bank note. "Man, man, and you were really taken in by that beggar's claptrap. Why—look you—in that old chap's day there weren't enough white men in Central Africa all put together ——"

"Borak!" I said. "*Will* you listen to that song!"

In the hollow of the market, above the grunt and snore of the caravan, the thin war chant of the "Yankis" wound on, repeating, repeating,

John B'own's body lahs amoldin' in the g'ave,
John B'own's body lahs amoldin' in the g'ave,
John B'own's body lahs amoldin' in the g'ave,
But his soul goes mahchin' on ——

In that Sahara darkness where the pale courses come from beyond the South I saw Atlanta burning. Sherman was on the march.

"ARAB STUFF"

FOR the hour I shone; and to say that one shines, if only by the company one keeps, on the terrace of the St. George at Algiers is to say no little thing, for is it not one of the marked night stops on the world's caravan route of the notable? Statesmen and the sons of kings, millionaires and adventurers and the Honorable the Lady Blankness, eagles and moths a-wing under the clustered lights or roosting in the shadows on the terrace outside—even in that company I shone for an hour in the light of my friends, a light doubly bright in that it had about it no glitter of hereditary title, no attitude, no pomp. The fame of my two companions was soundly won of themselves, essentially democratic, romantically American.

"You Americans! (How often I have heard it with a small self-conscious grin.) You can do anything! Anything!"

Four years ago the wholesome, girl-figured woman beside me had been a stenographer in a New Jersey building concern; Flo Danger even then. How many have imagined that? It seems incredible that it is not a screen name. . . . As for Braun, six years ago Braun had been handling boxes in an Oklahoma freightyard.

"You Americans!" To-night, for one person who would have recognized the king's son or the statesman on the street, there were a hundred who knew the name and genius of the scenario author, the producer of "A Man May be Down," "The Light of the West," and "The Dangers of 'Danger.'" And for one who may have been acquainted with the lineaments of the Honorable the Lady Blankness, how many in the world were the tens of thousands who had the likeness of Flo Danger in their poor, romance-starved, happiness-grasping human hearts?

She was something beyond tongue and race and creed. As no emperor or messiah, her calcium creature was present to all men, in Nome and Madagascar, in Sioux City and Hong Kong. Night by night, she and Braun spread on ten thousand screens the Word of the West. To black lands held bound in the never-neverness of fatalism they carried the high, cold, bracing wind of the gospel of a hopeful optimism. They made new tidings of worn things: "Honesty is the best policy," "Where there's life there's hope," and "Virtue is its own reward." . . . Not only its own reward but its own defense, for who can ever doubt that who has watched Flo Danger, week in, week out, passing through the nets of a hundred conspiracies, Chinese Tong plots, Hindoo stratagems, Bolshevic revenges, Red Indian raids—passing unscathed and unarmed, save for the buckler of her wholesome girlhood, the serene

quick wit of innocence, and (I saw it lying in her lap there to-night) the famous ivory-handled automatic concealed in the famous lizard-skin purse?

Of course, not even the untutored Malay is going quite to believe that tender girl flesh can be repeatedly flung over cliffs and trampled under buffalo stampedes without being the worse for it in time; but after all he needn't. After all, it is only a symbol, and in any religion it is the symbol that matters.

"I shall die, and in the following episode (coming Saturday, 3.30, 7.30 and 9.00 P.M.) I shall rise again."

I needed that philosophy. I needed those two as the mill sail needs new wind. After months of a world of veiled, shamed women down in the interior, where the soul goes to sleep in filth, sloth, forgetfulness, monotony, and space, I needed the straight look of a home girl's eyes. After months of dealing with pompous and petty French colonial officialdom, I needed Braun's boyish outburst: "Well, then, just let one of 'em take seventeen of his French francs into any market to-day and try to buy one good round E Pluribus Unum. That's where he'll find out where *they* get off at!" . . . It wasn't boasting; it was only his exuberance.

There was to-night about those two an aura of even added romance, for it was to-day that they had returned from the desert, into which they had descended, unguarded and alone. And, what was

more in the ear of the world, absolutely unchaperoned! (I was perhaps the only man in North Africa who knew that they were husband and wife.) Yet all this consciousness of the interest they evoked seemed to roll off like the water from the duck's back. Had I been asked that evening, and had I not known them, I should have said they were a boy and a girl just graduated from some Middle-western college, chock-full of the joy that succeeds, and all ready to go out with a laugh and a clap on its shoulder to set straight the thinking of the world.

That, of course, was what they were, a boy and a girl from Freedom's Land, laughing in the face of Old Man Africa. And that, of course, was precisely why I needed them.

"And how did you come on in the south?" I asked them. "Get your 'backgrounds' all right?"

Braun slid farther down into his chair, making a mound of his shirt bosom. He looked at Flo and she looked at him. There was a moment of tragic communing. Then Flo giggled. Braun grinned.

"We're ruined."

They both began to talk at once with the eagerness of children.

"We've wasted one whole lovely month of our lives ——"

"To say nothing of putting the skids under the grandest little film that ever germ-ey-nated in the brain of man."

Their mood of mental and physical relaxation grew hilarious when they talked about it. After all, *one* failure, to the sort of people who know that in the sum-total of things they are bound to succeed, one failure is a joke.

"If only," sighed Flo, "if only Arno, you'd had enough sense to keep away!" And turning to me: "He had a grand film to do. Honest, it would have gone huge, and I know. Full of striped tents and city gates and camels and rugs and harems and sheiks with cruel eyes and a good wholesome American girl and . . . and . . . and sand. . . ."

Braun threw back his head and exploded: "Sand!"

Flo turned her brimming eyes. "We haven't found enough sand to ——"

"No," I said, "you'd have done better for sand down Egypt way."

"Or in Los Angeles."

"No, by crime!" Braun brought his fist down with a sudden violence on the arm of his chair. "No, Flo, I tell you again, *that's* the trouble with American art. And that's what I, for one, want to shake clear of. It doesn't seem to me we'll ever get anywhere until we go in for the real. Of course, we could have done it out there on the Coast; we had everything, props, sets, people; but what I didn't have and what Flo didn't have was the—the—Oh, damn it! the *breath* of the thing—the ——"

Laughter came out of Flo's full-rounded white throat.

"For Goodness Sakes, Arno, don't! *Don't look like William Farnum!* . . . He's got into a frightful habit lately of looking like people," she confided. "I wish you could have seen the chest on him when he tore up the governor-general's safe-conduct."

"What's this?"

"Oh, yes, indeed. Addressed to all officers, civil and military, and sheiks, too, with a red seal. . . . You might at least have saved it for a prop, Arno. . . . But no, when we got ready to push off from El Kantara down there, nothing would do but he must tear it all up in little bits—and you know that what-the-hell look of Doug Fairbanks ——"

Braun picked up the challenge.

"Well, then, if you want to put it that way, what the hell? How much realism do you think we'd get turning up at this sheik, Muley Kaf's, with a don't-you-dare-touch-these-folks from the governor? Look here, old man, to make it concrete: one of the things I was after was the feeling a man, a regular average, every-day American fellow, would have, getting by secret into a harem."

I suppose he saw my eyes open. His strong chin came forward.

"Yes, that's what I aimed to do. That's what I *have* done."

"And as for Flo," he went on, while Flo put both hands tight over her mouth, "Flo's job was to get the sensations of a good, quick-witted, wholesome American girl in the power of an Arab sheik ——"

Flo could not stand it any longer. She would have strangled.

"And—and—*I have been.* Oh, it's too killing! But, no—Arno—Oh, Man, go on and lead up to it!"

Braun had the saving sense to grin.

"Well, we started out into the wild Aures on a couple of mules."

So there, at the very launching, was disillusionment. "Missouri mules!" They had been told that if anywhere they were to find the reality of Barbary it would be in the back valleys of the stark *massif* of the Aures. And now, not a wink of a camel from beginning to end.

"And when I think of the thousands of dollars it's costing me to hire and feed those ships of the desert out on the Coast!"

"And when I think," Flo sighed, "how I would film on a mule!"

A betrayal of romance, deepening hour by hour. They had wanted desert, and by desert they knew what they meant. And by some hiatus of imagination their local arranger had given them mountains.

"We could even have done mountains out there on the Coast if these things had been mountains.

Look here, I came to Africa to see big things, big emotions, big courage, big vices, big land!"

Poor people! In the healthy western exuberance of their spirits they had wanted anything, anything but stagnation, anything but drab and slatternly space. And then the humanity!

"Look here, do you imagine I could do a Bedouin horseman now? With a straight face. Even if I could pick up a bunch of 'extras' that could make up to look dead, filthy, contemptible, lazy, and worthless enough? I could not. And did they attack us? They did not. They took the other side of the hills, in a cloud of dust."

It seems, though, that the thing in Braun—the romanticist or poet or what you wish to call it—was not yet ready for final surrender. "Wait," he had said. "This may be bunk. But this Muley Kaf we're going to see, he must be something if he's head sheik of a region as big as Virginia. And this town, Beni Sid. That means 'Sons of the Lion.' Wait till we see Beni Sid."

"I waited," Flo told me, "and I wish you could have seen Arno's face."

I could imagine it. To one who has been a long time in the desert there may be something mildly exciting in that naked, square-housed, mud-colored village squatting in the midst of a few stunted and unkempt mountain palms, but to one fresh from the sights of the Oriental Section at Universal City it must be a let-down indeed.

They had one moment, though, when the sheik,

Muley Khaf, came riding out (to their amazement) to greet them by name in perfect French and usher them to the sheikly guest house.

"That man would do. Red robes, silks, white turban, red boots ——"

Flo took up the category, "And an aquiline nose, velvet-black inscrutable eyes . . ."

"A little sinister," I put in, for I too knew Muley Khaf.

Flo pursed her lips in doubt, but Braun turned and looked me in the eyes with the straight look of the Anglo-Saxon.

"Sinister? Bosh! old man. Bosh!"

Then he was smiling again with that humor that will not down.

"He had a good horse between his legs too; a shade on the under fed, but pretty all the same, with a high red saddle—great stuff!"

"Arno looked especially at the horse, you understand. And he said to Muley: 'I'm that hungry I could eat a *horse!*' "

Their eyes met for an instant, twinkling.

"It's like this," Braun explained. "I have to read a good deal for these plays of mine, and once I came across the story of an Arabian king who thought he was the most generous of men. But once he heard of a poor man who was reputed more generous. This poor man had one beautiful steed and nothing else to his name. So this king sent one of his courtiers to ask the gift of the steed, just to see. The courtier arrived at the poor man's

tent at night tired and hungry, but he didn't count on much of a meal. What was his pleasant surprise when a fine stew was set before him. He ate it, thanked his host, and went to sleep. In the morning before he left he asked the gift of a steed. The poor man wrung his hands and wept. 'Ah me!' he cried, ''twas but last night when, seeing you hungry in my tent, I slew my only steed to give you of him to eat.' . . . Good stuff, eh? Darn good stuff! I was going to use that."

"So," Flo resumed, "he looked at Muley's horse and said: 'I'm that hungry I could eat a *horse!*' And *I* said: 'I'm that hungry I could eat a *white horse!*' Muley seemed to catch on. He bowed and put his hand on the horse's neck and said: 'Hers is the pure blood of the mare of the Prophet. I carried her from the foaling in my arms. But, nevertheless, the Arab's sweetest mare is meat none too sweet for the hunger of the guest in his house.' He bowed low again and gave the horse to a black boy to lead off behind the house."

"All that afternoon," Braun chuckled, "Flo was repenting at leisure."

"I was not. Didn't I keep saying: 'I will eat it'?"

"Oh, yes, she said it. . . . But let me tell you we had a wrastle with the household over that meal. First off, Muley was for sending it in to the guest house for us, and then when we'd made him see we had rather eat with him, Flo just caught the nigger wench in time that was starting

to set a *table,* with knives and *forks* in the court. 'Oh, no,' we told him, 'as long as we're with you we want to eat Arab style.' "

"Was he nice about it?"

"Nice! Good Lord, yes! Silk couldn't be politer. That's the discouraging thing when a man's going after realism in a country like this. You can't get away from it; from the lowest to the highest, your native is never going to be himself before the white man. Oh, yes, I know; technically perhaps the Arab is white. But all the same he ain't. If he was he wouldn't feel inferior. For instance, when that dinner was brought in. Here he was, lord-high-mighty ruler of the land, and yet do you think he presumed to eat with us? After he'd taken one bite that embarrassment came over him, and try our darnedest, we couldn't shake it. It's fundamental. All he'd do was sit there in a corner, sipping coffee and saying he wasn't hungry."

That their host (after having formally "eaten bread and salt" with them) might have been moved by other considerations (racial and religious) against further dipping the hand in the dish with "dogs of Unbelievers" would have surprised them. I wondered if I ought to explain. But I had a sneaking sense that it might sound a little like "showing off." And then too it would have been out of key with the mood. So instead I asked: "Was it good, the mess?"

"Well, if you'd seen Flo's expression when she'd

fished out her first hunk of meat, when she actually found it in her mouth. . . ."

"Arno, that's a lie. If you remember, I said: 'It's grand!' "

"Ho, ho! Well, you looked silly enough when he told us. . . . You see, I asked him casually if they often ate horse, and he looked a little bewildered and said no. Then he brightened up and said, 'Ah, monsieur, but you must understand. By the grace of God' (he never said Allah once; it was always *'Dieu,'* 'God'—but he was so damned polite) 'By the grace of God,' said he, 'as I was preparing to slay the mare for your eating, just then there came in a herd boy leading a sheep. And the meat of sheep is sweeter. So that I was glad.' He wanted me to pat him on the head, I suppose. I could have shot him."

"It's a queer thing," Flo reflected, "we were both prepared to eat horse, down to the last hideous hoof. And now mutton we could not eat. Actually! I suppose it was just the revulsion. Arno had brought along some crackers and cheese, fortunately. We finished off on those."

"They were kind of dry." Braun sucked his cheeks. "I'd have given a dollar for a glass of red wine. But either the old boy didn't have any . . ."

"It's against the Law of the Prophet."

"Lord! I know that. So it is of America. But somehow it had never occurred to me it ran right through to the better classes. Anyhow, it

was dry. Not only the crackers. I mean the whole situation. 'Flat, stale and unprofitable!' I had a feeling in my bones right then that we were going to draw a blank, but all the same we were there and it had to be gone through with, according to program.

"So by and by I got up and yawned and said I guessed I'd take a stroll. 'All right,' said Muley. Probably the lady was tuckered and would like to retire to the guest house, and he'd come along with me. That was Flo's cue. The moon had come up, which helped. She lay back on the cushions and looked at it and stretched kind of languorous-like and allowed there was no moon in the guest house, and please couldn't she stay where she was for a while? Surest thing in the world. Certainly she could. And now he'd step along with me. . . . *My* cue! No, said I, if he didn't mind I'd go alone for a little solitary communing with Nature. The man looked *shocked.*

" 'But, monsieur, that would be dangerous! My own people are honest; but these nomads! You don't know nomads! Dangerous, monsieur!'

"Dangerous! If he'd known what I'd have given just then for a touch of real danger, something to give my spine a taste of high life! I had to laugh. But he was bogg-eyed about it, and I was beginning to be up against it when I heard Flo saying under her breath: 'For the love of Mike, man, turn your head and walk the other way.' . . . I don't know yet what you did, Flo."

"What I did? Silly man!" In the half dark of the terrace Flo's eyes shone softly with a demure and mocking light. "No woman would have asked that question, Arno. I simply leaned over and laid a hand quietly on Muley's arm and covered my eyes with my lashes—but not quite, not quite, enough."

"Well, all I know is, it worked."

"Simple creatures! It *always* works. I heard your feet going off, Arno, and I didn't breathe till I heard the gate bang under the entrance arch. Then I closed my eyes, took a deep breath, and we were alone. He and I! The mysterious dark sheik and the American lass, in a desert courtyard, under the hot African moo-o-on! *Al-o--n---e!*"

Her laughter trilled and went away in the heavy-scented night.

"And then, Flo? You never told me. What then?"

"Then? Then I waited. And I waited. *And* I waited. When I'd waited centuries I *had* to open my eyes and look at him. There he sat. Staring at his thumbs. There he sat. There I sat, my hand gripping the automatic in my bag ready to sell my honor dearly. There the moon sat. Oh, my dears, it was too perfect!

"I began to think he was prepared to sit like that till the day of doom. He might have been a wooden Indian, except he was getting a funny color around the gills. I told myself I'd die before I spoke first, but after another century I said

'Ahem!' He only got stonier and greener. Then I sighed and looked at the moon and said how bright and far and cold it was, and did it make him lonely too?"

"What did he say to that?"

"He said: 'Where is your husband?' I said: 'Bother my husband! If I don't worry, why should *you?*' I hitched my cushion a little closer. He got still greener. The moon got still higher.

"By and by he repeated himself, 'Where is your husband?' He was still staring fascinated at those thumbs of his. And do you know what those thumbs were doing? The thumbs of that ruthless, passionate dare-devil of the Sahara? Well, they were shivering; shivering, I give you my word, like leaves. And at that the truth came over me in a flash what was wrong with him. He was scared to death of Arno!"

Braun chuckled. "And then, Flo?"

"Oh, then I just let go. If *that* was the matter, there was only one way to put him at his ease. Flinging my maiden modesty to the winds, I started out to vamp that man. Plain ten-twenty-thirty vamp. You're surprised?" she asked me with a smile. "Let me tell you a secret my dear man. My first littlest bit of a name I made in a scarlet-woman rôle, years ago. That's God's own truth. You're surprised at that? You're just like the public. Ask any big director, and he'll tell you the same. For your ideal film vampire what you want to hunt for is your honest, wholesome girl; the

girl that brings her mother to the Coast with her and cuts out the beach parties and goes to church and isn't afraid of work. That's queer; and like many queer things it's true. The simplest, sweetest girlie in the world knows how to use her eyes, simply from the fact that she was born girl. . . . And believe me, that night I used my eyes!

"Well," she went on with a whimsical sigh, "I vamped. *And* I vamped. If it hadn't been purely for getting stuff I'd almost have blushed.

She put her hands over her face of a sudden. Her voice was small.

"Heavens! Now, when I think of it in cold blood, it *does* make me blush. . . . I—I—I—put—*I put my head on his s-h-o-u-l-d-e-r!*"

After a moment she took her hands away. Her cheeks were rosy, but there was a glint in her eyes.

"Oh yes, it's funny! It's a scream! Now! But I'll tell you—I never confessed this to you, Arno—there came a time that night when the point of the joke began to wear off. I'll tell you a secret about women. No woman alive enjoys being turned down by a man, even if the reason is only that the man is scared of the woman's husband. In her heart of hearts the woman always feels that somehow the man ought to be too much carried away even for that. . . . Yes, frankly, my 'goat was got.' Arno, I could have slain you. Here I was in my grand scene, and everything wrong-end-to. And all your fault for looking so

disgustingly husky and masculine and western. And I could have slain *him,* too. There I'd brought along my automatic as a kind of last resource, in case he should get *too* seriously funny; and now I felt like shooting him for *not*—for being a sniping half-lump of a man that wouldn't take a chance. . . . First it made me tired. Then I got mad. I saw red. That was how it worked. And when for the tenth time he asked me where my husband was I went up in the air.

"I did! It was a fool thing, I know, but it seemed to me if I didn't do some fool thing that minute I should explode. Do you know what I did? I took hold of his chin and made him look at me, and I just hissed at him:

" 'You want to know where my husband is? Well, I'll tell you. *He is in—your—harem! There!*' . . . I wasn't going to tell you that, Arno."

At least she had made us both open our eyes. It was the first time I had ever seen a frown on Braun's face. He spoke slowly.

"That *was* rotten, Flo. Flo, I'm sorry you did that. I wouldn't have had that happen for a million dollars. After all, you know—black, brown, yellow—no matter what kind of a person you're with—after all, you're their *guest.* That's honestly how I feel about it."

"But it wasn't true!" I gasped. "You weren't! actually!"

He shook himself free of his ill humor, and a

reminiscent gleam lit his eye. His clean-cut jaw thrust forward a bit.

"Yes," he said quietly. "I was."

"Good Lord, man, tell me about it!"

"If there was anything to tell then we shouldn't be coming back with this sense of failure on our souls." He smiled with a hint of indulgent irony. "It's a simple tale."

"But how did you get back into the house again?"

"Child's play. I never went out. I simply slammed the door and then lay doggo inside for a spell under the archway. When I thought the coast was clear I sneaked back on tiptoe along the gallery that runs around the court, and when I came to the door I had spotted—Oh, I hadn't been idle that afternoon with my eyes, and especially my ears—when I came to it I went in. That's have had the cold nerve to do it?

It was simple, yes; and yet how many men would have had the cold nerve to do it?"

"And after I was in," he went on in his laconic western way, "and around a corner in the dark passage, I scratched a match and had a look. And I saw the dragon. The dragon was that nigger wench who had brought in the dinner. She sat on the floor on a piece of gunnysack, staring at me with eyes as big and as white as saucers. I pulled out my automatic, made a few passes before her black face so she could have a good look at it, and then I had a talk with her.

" 'Where are his wives?' says I. *'Ses femmes? Où? Ses femmes?'*

"Not a gleam! She wasn't meat; she was icicle, froze cold to the core. Scared? Yes indeed. Besides, it came to me, maybe she didn't know French. So I tried the Arabic. 'Harem?' says I, 'Harem?' That worked better, or maybe it was the cool of the gun muzzle on her chin. Anyhow, she managed to move one eye toward the end of the hall. 'All right,' says I. I had a handful of this stage money the French use in my pocket, and I took it out and dumped it in her lap. That's the language they *all* know. The way she caught on would make you laugh. 'Now,' says I, laying my cheek on my hand, 'you go by-by. Sleep. *Dormire*. And if you snore a little it won't hurt.' And then I went on, easy in my mind.

"I came to the door she had looked at. I laid aside the rug hanging. I entered into the sheik's harem. Moonlight falling through a lofty grill flooded the spacious apartment, in the center of which a fountain plashed softly within its marble rims. On the tesselated pavement, on a dozen richly embroidered cushions, reclined the sloe-eyed daughters of delight. One trailed an idle hand in the pool; one braided her raven tresses; one, taking up a lute, made a langourous music that fell softly on the air, heavy-sweet with musk and amber. One, at sight of me in the doorway, half-rising from a divan . . . Oh, man, was it? Did they?"

I met his grin with one of my own, as sheepish.

"I'm afraid not. They told me last year that Muley Khaf had only one current wife. The war's left them all pretty poor, you know. But perhaps—since then ——"

"No. As I started to say; one, half-rising from a divan—well, that *one* was the wives of the sheik, and the divan was a brass bedstead, and yesterday's cabbage was the amber and musk. Yes, sir. Except for that brass bed and a kind of painted tool chest in the corner and about four German-dyed carpets, there wasn't one God's stick of furniture in that mud room. And as for the Oriental Beauty!"

Braun put his head down in his hands.

"She had on a Mother Hubbard!" he groaned. "With *spots!*"

"This person," he went on presently, "was scared. Bogg-eyed. For a minute I was in a sweat she'd let out a yell—her mouth was wide open. I gave her a sheen of the gun in the moonlight, but now I don't think there was any need. She was simply petrified!

" 'Well,' says I to myself, 'Where do we go from here?' I went and sat down on a corner of the bed and looked at her, my heart, going down, down, down. So *this* was that I'd come expensively all this way to see. I wanted to laugh. I wanted to hoot like an owl.

"Her fright was honestly painful. If there's anything I hate and detest it's to scare a kid. Yes,

that's right; that's what I mean. A kid. This wife of Muley Kaf's, this tousle-headed queen of the harem—I give you my word when I came to look at her closer, she couldn't have been a day over thirteen. Can you beat it? Thirteen years old, a wife, and (I'll whisper it) prospectively, a mother.

"Now you can imagine how I felt. There she sat, this poor, pathetic, whipped kid, staring at me like a ghost, with her eyes and her mouth wide open. . . . I was as gentle as I could be.

" 'Look at me,' says I, putting the gun out of sight. 'Do I look like a person that would hurt you?' . . . (Not a ray.)

" 'Lord o' Love, sister,' says I, 'I'd no more think of harming one little hair on your head ——'

"Of course, it was all Greek to her. I don't suppose she'd have known even French, or anything but Arabic."

"Perhaps not even Arab," I put in. "It's Berber country, you know."

"So? Oh! Well, whatever it was, there we were at a deadlock. There she sat hugging her bib-and-tucker to her neck. And (apologies to Flo) there *I* sat. Silence.

"Now, you can laugh. Especially when you think what I came all this way to get; stuff for a very dramatic scene, sumptuous and passionate and all that. And do you know what I got? I got mad. Plain, boiling mad! When I looked at that kid there, that little innocent girl that ought

to have been in school or playing with other kids or tucked in at night by a mother's hand—when I looked at that kid there and thought of those others, the laughing, wholesome, care-free kids back there in God's country—Damn it! No, I've got to swear! Damn it! You know what? It seemed to me the only honest thing a man could do would be to go out and walk through this land from one end to the other with a Lewis gun, cleaning up this human garbage they call 'men.' Missionaries? God'l'mighty! the only missionaries they deserve is a bunch of boys from Texas with six-guns. . . . No, I'm not often dead in earnest, but I am now. When I looked at that sallow-faced child that this Muley shut up in a mud cage and called a 'wife,' why it seemed the only thing I could do and keep my self-respect would be to walk out and fill him with honest American lead.

"And then there he was. 'Speak of the Devil' . . . I saw the kid's eyes growing if anything bigger, and I heard feet behind me at the door. I slid my hand in my pocket and I got up to face him. I didn't hurry. I was that mad I was as cool as a cucumber.

"There he stood in the doorway, his face as white as a sheet. I expected ructions. I didn't care. I had him covered from my pocket, even if he didn't know it, and one false move on his part——

" 'If you got anything to say,' says I, 'say it!'

"The sanctity of the harem! The fatal honor of the Arab! Sudden death! Lord, I've known 'em since I was a kid. Well, do you know what that Oriental nobleman said to me? He said:

" 'Coffee is being served in the courtyard.'

"Well, you could've knocked me over. I followed him. Actually. I went and sat down beside Flo. The nigger wench brought in two cups of coffee, looking kind of puffy around the eyes as if she'd had a call-down. We drank the coffee while Muley sat there staring at his thumbs. I looked at Flo and I said: 'How goes it?' 'Elegant! and with you?' says she. 'Immense!' . . . That was the straw that ruined the camel. We simply fell on each other's necks. We simply *yelled!*

"When Flo got her breath back and the tears brushed out of her eyes, 'Arno!' she wailed, 'I want to go home!'

" 'Here, too,' says I. 'A mule, a mule, my kingdom for a mule!'

" 'I don't know whether it was that the man understood a few words of English or not, but pretty soon he spoke up. 'The mules of monsieur and madame will be saddled at the gate at the hour of dawn.' For a minute it was kind of embarrassing—if he had understood—I didn't want to make it look like we were eating and running. Flo saw it in my eye. She got hold of my wrist. 'Arno!' she hissed, *'This is no time for politeness!'* It was the way she said it. I couldn't help it again; I

howled. But it *was* funny. There we were, weeks wasted, all our pet illusions shattered, play gone to pot ——"

"Why?"

It was the first thing Flo had said for a long while. A light of preoccupation was in her eyes.

"Why 'gone to pot?' " she repeated in the same slow, musing way.

"Why? Simply, Flo, because if I can't do a thing sincerely; if I've got to go about a thing with my tongue in my cheek ——"

"Yes, Arno, but why? Think! You came to find realism, and now that you've found it ——" She let her words trail off, her eyes still holding his, her head tilted, birdwise. There was a moment of silence, and then Braun said, deep in his throat: "By George!"

"Yes, that's what I mean. Why not," she insisted, " 'hold the mirror up to nature' as she *is*. A good satire is as good Art as anything. Honestly, you know, I believe it would go big."

"Look at 'A Yankee at the Court of King Arthur!' " It was Braun's turn now. 'It's made a mint. And look at that one—I forgot the name —where Mary Pickford showed up the Nabobs of India!"

Again there was silence, a moving and pregnant silence this time, in which one seemed to feel a mental clash, a kaleidoscopic tumbling into symmetry of things sharp-edged and crystalline. There

is something not of every day in being present at the coming to bed of an idea.

"That's the way of it," Braun's musing grew audible. "Take a young fellow—you could play that part, Flo, like what's-her-name in *Treasure Island*—take some orphan kid that's been kicked around the gutters of some Middle-western town all his life—bullyragged and browbeaten by everybody till he's got the notion he isn't worth a continental—take this kid and bring him over here somehow. Well, and—and let him have read a lot of *Arabian Nights* or something, so he arrives here all eyes and awe for the splendors of the Orient and the fierceness of the magnificent sheiks. Let him go out into the desert. He's almost afraid to raise his eyes to these lords of creation—almost—not quite, for he's Anglo-Saxon clear through—and when he does, what is his stupefaction to find them all kowtowing. Listen, this is good. Let him get into a harem, bogg-eyed with expectation, and stumble over a dish of potato peelings, and then throw on a two-dollar bedroom at the Commercial House at home that he'd thought so tawdry, and all its modern comforts; and we must get the outraged Arab husband creeping in armed to the teeth for revenge . . . and when he sees this American kid there—well, whatever we *don't* do, we've got to get in that 'Coffee is being served in the courtyard!' Oh, say! this will bear going into. . . ."

I could see they wanted to think. They wanted

to be alone. I delivered them up with some mumbled urbanity and watched them go, threading their way through the throng in the salon beyond the tall bright windows. I saw men and women of cosmopolitan fame turn to look after them as they passed. But they did not know it. To those two the bigness and glory of that night was within themselves. They had tasted failure (even if it were a laughing failure) and now, amazingly, unexpectedly, they found failure turned into the prospect of a laughing success. . . . And how typical that was!

"You Americans! You can do anything!"

It was almost a year later that I found myself in the Aures and came to Beni Sid, "Sons of the Lion." Si Muley was absent on government affairs in Ain Touta. I went up from the guest house at evening and sat in the graveyard, a naked earth pitted with the ghoul work of jackals. The sun, sinking down into the desert plain beyond the hills, cast an aureate flame over the gorge walls, and there was peace. The bleat of flocks gathering home under the ragged palms where the shadow already flooded the oasis and the town, gave a body to the silence; the silence as ancient as the granite hills themselves.

A woman had followed me up the slope and now sat on a neighboring grave. Her name was Meryam and she was so old that everyone, includ-

ing herself, had forgotten her years, a gossip of mine from other days. An incorrigible gossip! Her words, toothless, and still further blurred by the greasy kerchief which she held from long habit over her mouth, ran on and on and mingled with the distant voices of the flocks, and it never mattered much whether I listened or no.

"What of the Americans?" I inquired by and by. "The *Roumi?* Remembrest thou? The *Roumi* twain that was here?"

The flow of Meryam's speech was halted. After a moment she lifted the kerchief and leaning over clear of the grave spat on the ground. After another moment she said: "It is of little marvel, however, that they should not be learned in the manners of the world, for are they not ignorant of the Word of God (to whom be the prayer!)? Canst thou look for the ways of gentlefolk in the *dar* of the Infidel?"

"But I am told, Meryam, that against them Si Muley raised not his hand."

"How then may a man raise a hand that is bound? Our master had eaten the bread and salt with this twain. And knowest thou not the reading of the blessed Book as it regards the traveler which shall be entered at nightfall into thy tents?"

I fell to musing. The creature's word mumbled on, troubling the immense, dry, empty hush of the wrinkled Sahara hardly at all.

"Our master was affectionate toward the face

of this Aisha, for she was to bear him presently, *in-cha-'llah,* a son."

"Aisha? That, Meryam, is Si Muley's young wife whom he brought from the vale of the Ouled Abdi two springs ago? But thou sayest 'was.' Is he then no longer affectionate in the face of that one?"

"Thou sittest, *sidi,* on the grave of that one."

I stared down between my knees at the mound of desert earth and a heaviness came on me.

"Ai, *sidi,* those twain are dead, Aisha and Zina, that black serving woman from the Soudan. And I, Meryam, was at their dying."

The sun had dipped beneath the desert's edge, ninety million miles away; a shadow came over the earth and sat on my soul.

"Those twain had eaten of the *couscous* which our master had caused to be sent in to them, and now they waited, knowing well the seasoning wherewith it had been salted. And Aisha contained her heart, and she said with a jest: 'Look thou, are we then become men at last? that we may be given to dip first in the evening dish.' But the serving woman, she who for twenty *duoro* in the Frenchmen's money paper had been leagued with her in the sin ——"

"But there *was* no sin! Meryam, this is devil's work. There was no sin. Of this thing I have a sure knowledge. Ah, Meryam, thou understandest not the American!"

"That may hap be true, *ya sidi.* We Mussul-

mans pretend only to know the Law. The Law is the Light, and the Light is the truth of all things. And sayeth not the Law, that Law which was before even the blessed Prophet of God: 'Such woman shall be known adulterous as has remained alone with any man for the space of the cooking of an egg'? And is it well for a man, a princely man, a sheik of the true believers, to harbor an adulteress in his house and bed? Say, *ya sidi!*"

After a little I began to unravel her monotonous words again.

"It was after the fall of the sun; there came a darkness in that room, so that I could see only the eyes of those twain which were set toward the lattice, waiting. And as I watched, grief came into my entrails with a pain, as though I, too, had dipped in that dish, for sorrow of them, and perforce I could not stay, but must go out of the house where I might not see. And when I returned, Si Muley, drinking with his coffee-companions in the court, wept behind his hand, and in the chamber of the women those twain were dead. . . ."

I got up from sitting on that grave and withdrew a step and looked down at it in the gathering shadows. Already, between the two blank slabs of granite, the inquisitive paw of a jackal had been at work. A sepulcher of no beauty and of no hope.

It needed a something—a something it had not got.

"I shall die, and in the following episode (com-

ing Saturday, 3.30, 7.30 and 9.00 P.M.) I shall rise again."

"Ah, you Americans!"

Aisha and Zina and Meryam and Muley Khaf and Mohammed, Prophet of the One God, would do better for a little of that philosophy of yours, would they not?

And the mocking devil of it is, they *would*.

THE MAN WHO SAT

THIS is the story the steam sailorman told me. It had impressed me as odd at first that in the storehouse of his recollection, filled with the figures, the passages, and episodes of great spaces, it should be the comparatively domesticated basin of water known as the Mediterranean that should attract the truest enthusiasm of his memory—odd and somehow ironical—until he let me know that it was there within those coasts, bound out of Gibraltar for Nice in a six-hundred-ton rich man's steam barkentine yacht, that he suffered his first and only disaster at sea.

It is natural, of course, that shipwreck should stand out as the salient property in a mariner's recollection. But after all, when he came to tell me of it, this was hardly a proper shipwreck; at least it had none at all of the romantic trappings we have been taught to expect; no gales, no reefs, no taking to the boats. There was not even a lee shore, since there was no wind to make one. A calm, clear Riviera noon, the yacht steaming smartly to the eastward broad off the Esterelle, the owner and his wife ensconced in deck chairs aft, the navigator in his chart room, the chef in his galley, God in his heaven and all right with

the world—all this and my sailor smoking his pipe on the bowsprit butt—all this and Giles, chief engineer, lowering his head through the open hatch of the boiler room and going suddenly pasty around the gills—all this at high noon close off the Azure Shore of France—when boom! bang! up goes the iron paraphernalia of the boiler room through the yacht's white deck!

"Well," continued the sailorman, when he had described the confusion of the following moments, the cries of the victims, the half-successful attempt at panic, the "fit" the owner's wife "threw" on the afterdeck, the tardy arrival of tugs from behind the mole at Cannes, the French doctor, the French doctor's cuffs—when he had described all this:

"Well," he said, "it was about that time I came on Giles, sound asleep in the port-side scuppers and bleeding to death.

" 'If ever you moved in your life,' said I to myself, 'move now!' I looked around me wild and witless, and there was that doctor aft bringing the old lady to with a bucket of water in the face. 'Get hold of him, Tobey,' says I, 'and do it quick!' For this engineer, this Giles, was as good a man as ever lived. 'Move!' says I.

"And do you know, sir, I never moved. I looked down at Giles. I looked at the shore, all upstanding fine mountains and cheery white towns. I looked at the Mediterranean Sea, all full of birds and fishes and boats with pink sails. I looked up

at the blue sky where God's supposed to sit in mercy. I looked down at Giles again.

"I just got through saying he was as good a fellow as ever was double-crossed by the devil and a plugged gage. There was never anything high and lofty about Giles. He was never the kind that was above a half-hour's chin of a night watch with the like of me, though I was an A. B. and he was chief, for he'd brought himself up to that from nothing by his own hard work, and he still could laugh. And a buck of a lad he was, too, a big straw-headed Scotchman for the girls to look at (and he knew it too and loved it), with a leg and a chest and a chin and that laugh of his. You might have thought it vanity till you heard that laugh. No, a good man and a likely man, Giles was, and a friend of mine.

"Well, I stood there looking down at him asleep in the scuppers and bleeding quietly to death. I stood there like an idiot. And I says to myself of a sudden, 'if you love him, Tobey, turn the other way. Turn your face and shut your mouth and leave him go in peace.'

"I did it. I turned the other way. And just that minute the doctor passed and I lost my nerve and grabbed him by the sleeve, and 'Here's a man,' says I, 'needs help.' There came a time when I wished, for that, they'd hauled the tongue out of my throat the day they called me Tobey."

Late that afternoon, tied up under the mole at Cannes, my sailor watched his friend go ashore

on a stretcher, breathing, but "still asleep." A half-hour previous to this the bulk of the crew had been paid off, and the owner, his wife, and retinue, shaken, disgusted, and thoroughly homesick, had got themselves down the gangplank and "off for Cleveland, Ohio, in a flock of cabs." The remains of two stokers and an oiler were removed at nightfall. Then the crowd on the mole broke up and peace descended upon the vessel; a peace destined to endure for months.

The sailor did not need to tell me about that, for I've known the like. I can see her sitting there, still gaping and smutty amidships, tied by her stern to the mole along with the other abandoned ones, so close to the dance of life that its skirts brushed their hawser ends, and withal isolated, remote. "Wallflowers" at the ball.

I say, close to the dance. The dress parade of the *Croisette* would bow and rustle and clack its heels under her very counter. The Flower of Fashion would bloom in the shadow of her spars. At dusk, when the flame was going out of the sky behind the Esterelle, the tea-soppers from Bougie's and Rumpelmeyer's, meeting the stream of aperitif-swiggers flowing westward toward the Allées, would set up within a stone's cast of her blighted taffrail the diurnal whirlpool of half after five. And when the night came down black and electric-starred, and the façade of the Casino, lying broad beyond the mole, burst into hundred-penciled light, the glow from it would run down across the stone

to the very threshold of her empty gangplank and cast a ghostly refraction on the nether side of her awning cloth. The lilt of an area escaping the opera wing, the pestilential outburst of the Southern Dixie Jazz band in the dancing hall, the monotonous formulas of the *croupiers* at *boule: "Les jeux sont faites!"—"Rien va plus!"*—all these strays of sound, separate or intermingling, would float out through the night to die in the darkness among the spars of those play ships beyond the mole, a world away.

For they are a world away. After all, there is no silence. The mistral is blowing burly and chill against the seaward side of house and hull, trunk and spar. It bears in its body the bitterness of weed and muck and spume, the roar of far-off breakers, the impalpable sheet of the main. The spent ripples rock the craft infinitesimally among its tetherings; the halyards slat the masts; the wraith of the attending seaman, the pea-jacketed janitor, bending over a watch in the yellow eye of a galley port, yawns and speaks to God: "God, is it only that late yet?"

"It was lonesome work there," said the sailor. "You wouldn't think it, nor did I the first few days, what with everybody in the world going by, flower fights at the end of the mole, free music, cheap drinks up the line. And plenty of English and Americans. Americans? Well, you know: you were there once. No, I can see them strolling

out the mole now, dressed kind of careless at a thousand dollars a throw, stopping to look at the name and sailing port on the counter, shifting their gaze to the flag with a sort of Adam's-apple motion, then to me, nursing a chew on the taff'l, then to somebody's poodle dog scratching a flea off on the boulevard. I got so I sat at the bow end by preference and spit to sea. No, it was lonesome work.

" 'It'll be better when Giles comes back aboard,' I says to myself. But it wasn't. If it was lonesome before, it was twice as bad now, being lonesome for the two of us. He wouldn't rouse himself even to that. He used to be ambitious and on the job. Of course he couldn't be on the job now, the condition he was in, but it wasn't that. He was changed, inside. He was dead. I can't make you understand, but if you'd seen him sitting there, sitting there ——"

The sailor did make me understand. He succeeded in making me envision the engineer sitting there and sitting there, from the early light to the dark of every day, stretched out in the departed owner's deck chair, his figure swathed to mummification in the owner's expensive rugs; his handsome head, craggy with the drain of fever, relaxed on the pillow; his face, bloodless at first but beginning after a while, with the solid food, the incessant inverted sunshine off the deck, and the unconquerable life-lust in the marrow of his Scotch bones, to recapture little by little the old ruddiness

of cheek—his face, I repeat, set somberly away from the near tide of life, and the eyes in it, narrowed under the lids, resting for hours at a time with a heaviness of surrender on the blue horizon beyond the Isles.

Or no, not of surrender. "He was dead," were Tobey's words. But about this condition there was something too positive; something constructed, sustained, and fierce.

"All my life long," he said one day to Peg Tyrone, "I've been working for some one else. Fetching and carrying and tinkering and running off to the ends of the world for some one else. I'm through. From now on I do nothing for anyone. Not even myself."

He pronounced this without affectation, either of bravado or self-pity. The matter-of-factness of it, addressed not to her but as always to the line of the sky, shocked her profoundly—as will be seen.

That was some weeks, I judge, after her advent upon the scene of the yacht's deck. What had brought her wandering up that gangplank in the first instance I cannot say. Perhaps the sailor's "She came up half grinning and half bold, like a kid playing pirate on his own," may be as near as anything to the mark. Perhaps indeed it may have been some vagrant, mild, feminine cousin in her of the manly impulse to "go to sea" that lured her feet there. Or again it may have been the suddenly-conceived new pleasure of

fleeing the familiar pleasure of masculine adoration. That she was used to this the sailor left no doubt.

"They fell down by squads, sir, and rose up to follow. A peach! An unpicked peach in the morning with the fuzz on! And the men! The Frenchmen, Englishmen, Dutchmen, Turks! You'd be amazed! And the way they followed that girl! Indecent, sir. The only time I saw Giles look alive those days was the one time one of her beaus took it into his head to follow her on board. Giles surprised his pillow by lifting his head. He gave a look at this fellow—no Frenchy either, by jingo, but an honest Republican from Pittsburgh way that ought to have known better."

" 'Well?' says Giles, like that.

" 'Just looking around,' says the man, looking around at *her*.

" 'While you're looking you might look at the sign on the gangplank lift,' says Giles in the same tone. He put his head to rest again and stared at the skyline, as usual. The girl laughed. The man left.

" 'Why,' says Giles after a long time, without moving his eyes, 'why do you come here?'

" 'On my word of honor,' says she, 'I don't know.' "

It would not be easy, perhaps, for anyone to say. She was still young, healthy, buoyant; her success was in her own hands (she sang contralto rôles at the Casino Opera at least twice a week,

and her Paris début was fixed, I gathered, for the Spring), and above all these personal properties, behind, around, binding them together, was the incomparable property of her beauty—that glinting, hundred-mooded clash-in-the-flesh of Spain cast on the shores of Ireland, before which men bowed them down and rose up afterward to follow. That made everything so easy. She was Fortunatus's daughter.

" 'Never have I had to work for anything,' she once told Giles. 'Never have I had to do anything I didn't love the doing of.' "

Perhaps half the secret is hidden there. There is a perversity in nature which leads the human system, after having dined to repletion on noble foods, rich soups, fat roasts, and perfumed sweets, to crave at the banquet's end a morsel of abomination, such as certain kinds of cheese. I don't mean to liken Giles to cheese, nor to call him abominable. But there is still something there. In Peg Tyrone's train there were princes (authentic ones, if the sailor is to be believed), and some men clever and some rich. And there at the end of this noble and desirous repast sat Giles, the seafarer, rearing the corn-colored head of a minor god, to be sure, but still the engine hostler, the fellow of low estate, his hands still scarred with his years of servitude, his body still racked with disaster of his own making, his heart gone back to clay. There he sat, chained to the scene and witness of his failure by the humiliating circumstance that he had nowhere

else to go. Hardly the figure, you know—in competition with princes!

No. But there sat Giles, swathed "like a mummy" in his eternal rugs, and there sat Giles, and there Giles sat. And in that circumstance itself may have lain perhaps the secret's other half. Giles was stationary, if nothing else. Peg Tyrone's life was, I doubt not, like the town about her, a thing of perpetual motion. It was a tissue of daily, even hourly change. Therein lay its peculiar delight. If a thing were pleasant, a face, an advance, an inner view, a dance, a frock, an ambition, a rendezvous, a cup of tea, it was doubly to be valued on account of its evanescence. If it were not pleasant, it had not long to be endured; something new was at the door. Therein lay its delight, I say, and at the same moment its germ of rot and unfulfilment. In the midst of that whirlpool of colored hours, but not of it, sat Giles, colorless to be sure, but for one thing hard, and for the other thing still. He was always there, like the Rock of Gibraltar.

"She took him up one day on that," pursued the sailor. "She says to him, cocking her head to one side to study him; she says, 'Why do you never move?'

"I was scraping the dinghy ten feet away, and my ears stood up to hear him answer. He waited a minute.

" 'When I left the hospital,' says he, 'the doctor told me I could sit as long as I liked.'

" 'I know,' says she, 'but Giles, look at you! An ill man, are you? With two cheeks like that? No, Giles, it's a fraud you are, my lad.'

" 'The doctor said I could sit. It's the first chance I ever had.'

" 'But lad! lad! have you no rebellion in you? A man is the creature that tells the doctor to go to perdition and gets up and walks abroad to catch his death—that's a man! Isn't there sometimes in your hands the itch for a go of work, or in your feet to run on the grass? Isn't there an ambition left in the heart of you?'

"It took him a minute to swallow that. But, then, he always made her wait. And in his own good time, speaking to the ocean at large, he says, 'All my life long I've been working for some one else—fetching and carrying and tinkering and running off to the ends of the world for some one else. I'm through. From now on I do nothing for anyone. Not even myself.'

"That took her aback. *That* was something for a Christian to get down. By and by she says, 'Giles,' she says, 'I don't believe a word of it. You say that because you haven't thought. Now let's suppose,' says she, 'there was some one—a girl, say—a little baby girl—playing on the mole just there, all alone—and suppose you were to see her slip now and go tumbling down into the water. Now, don't you suppose, Giles, that you'd rouse up your lazy bones and get across the four precious yards to that

rail and over it—quick enough? Tell me that, lad!'

"Never a word. I took a peek at his face and I saw it settling into itself like a block of Portland cement. Never a stir nor a word. Peg was biting her lips; I saw that, too. But she wouldn't give up.

" 'Giles, darling,' says she, leaning toward him a bit, 'you know you would now, wouldn't you?'

" 'I'll be damned if I would,' says Giles."

He pronounced it, if I get my narrator's sense, not in any swashbuckling way, but with an air of somber and static ferocity. It was not the sort of thing one says to a lady, especially (I'm afraid to confess) to a lovely one. A slap in the face could not have been more shattering to the illusions of Peg Tyrone.

"Until that moment (it is conceivable) she may have succeeded in interpreting his silences, his sustained aversion of the eyes, his boorish ways with her in general, as but the gestures of a shyness not to be wondered at in one of his state and station when confronted with the gratuitous and almost incredible society of Peg Tyrone—and as such, of course, as a novel guise of the familiar homage of men, doubly pleasant for an idle hour. (So little did she suspect that Giles, too, had known what it was to be the darling of another sex.)

"After that, though; after she had made the world-overturning discovery that what she had to do with here was no awkward, incredulous swain, but a man self-flayed in deliberate agony and issued

from the ordeal delivered from all the shackles of the senses, the hunger of sight, the thirst of the ears, the itch to touch—a man (it must have seemed to her, in short) to whom the volume of space occupied at any moment by Peg Tyrone's loveliness was precisely as interesting as any other chance equal cubic content, and not one mathematical whit more so or less—when she had made this discovery there was only one thing for her to do, and that was to think deliberately about something else and say something vacuous and casual and take her leave for good and all. That was the only possible thing; unless, indeed, she wanted to go stark mad and fall in love with Engineer John Giles. And that would hardly do; unless, indeed, she could find some other name to do it by.

"Fate, it appears, working darkly among the vocal cords of the engineer, had even now prepared the name.

" 'I'll be damned if I would!' he had pronounced. After a moment he went on, talking to the edge of the world. 'If I were once to walk myself as far as that rail the spell would be broken, and I'd never sit again. I'd go on walking till the end of my days. No, I'll be damned if I would!' "

It was at that instant, I divine, that Peg made the second discovery, the one that clarified everything, even her own queer unmanageable emotions, and set it all right. "If I were once to walk myself

that far ——" It must have caught and blazed in her imagination; her wishful imagination. Fairy-tales and sorceries! "Thou shalt not waken from this sleep till the day a prince shall come through the wood and—and ——" Ah, well! There it was. No, any talk of love between a Tyrone and a Giles was one thing. But pity was another. A high, chivalrous, romantic intent to rescue; that was altogether another thing.

"She seemed changed after that," the sailor told me. "I don't know what it was, but she didn't talk so much. Sometimes she'd sit for an hour and stare at the sky, the same as Giles, like she was thinking. She'd hold her chin in her hand, like that, like she was figuring.

"One day she cornered *me*. 'Tobey,' says she, 'whatever are we going to do to get the hypocrite on his feet? It's a big jolt of some sort he wants, don't you think now? For the sickness is in the head.'

" 'I wouldn't go so far ——' I was beginning, not sure just what to say, but she cut me off with scorn.

" 'Look at him!' says she. '*Look* at him! Look at the cheeks of him and the muscles in his wrists! His weakness is the weakness of the dray horse. No. Tobey, it's in the head, and especially in the heart of him. It's the tonic of a hard, quick pull at the head and heart that lad wants to-day, and you can't tell me otherwise.'

"I gave her a look, standing there in the gang-

way with the sun going down all red around her—(My God, man, she was a peach!)—and my own head and heart were low enough, and I can tell you that.

" 'Miss,' says I, 'you'll never forgive me ——' and then I couldn't think how to go. 'You'll never!' says I, looking east and west. 'Never!' says I. 'Only it's this way,' says I. 'From where I stand I can see at least a dozen men, and most of them are looking this way, and all of them are the kind of men you'd go better with, Miss Peg, than what you'd go with—with some others we know. You'll never forgive me; I know that ——'

"Lord love you, she wasn't listening. Then I took Tobey by the scruff of the neck and I said it out.

" 'For the sake of the Creator of Mercy, Miss Peg, if you've got any pity for Giles in your heart, do just one little thing for him. Forget him. Go on down that gangplank now, and forget the way back up. Do that one little thing, Miss Peg.'

"She gave me a smile for that; a sweet, absent-minded smile.

" 'But you don't know!' says I. 'You don't *know!*'

"She gave me another, halfway down the plank, she was that absent-minded and amused. It did nothing but make me mad. I could have eaten nails. I went back to Giles.

" 'Giles,' says I, 'you're a fine one! You're an elegant figure of a lady-killer, you are!'

" 'Tobey,' says he, 'don't!'

"But the devil himself was clawing my innards.

" 'You're the gay beauty, aren't you now,' says I, 'to carry 'em all before you?'

" 'Tobey,' says he again in a voice I ought to have realized, 'don't!'

" 'You're the dark hero, you are, to bring the queen of the ballroom crawling on her knees to ——'

"I oughtn't to have done it. I knew it! I knew it then.

" 'That woman?' says he. 'You mean that woman?'

"Have you ever heard that word 'woman,' sir, said like the deepest blasphemy a man can issue out of his mouth?

" 'That woman?' he says again. 'That fly-by-night of theaters and gaming halls? That plaything of every high-hatted bounder on the beach? That curled and painted ——'

" 'You lie!' I gave him. 'Every last word you say is a hell's lie, Giles, and, what's more, you know it!'

" 'And to come around me! *Me!* As if John Giles were one of the smooth-haired hounds her painted lips are wet with the kisses of! *Me!*'

" 'Lies! Lies!' My hands ached for his windpipe. 'If you feel that way about her, why don't you ever tell her the *truth* then? *All* of it! Say that, Mr. John Gentleman Giles!'

" 'Tobey,' says ne in a whisper, never taking his eyes from the sea, 'Tobey,' says he, 'go away! Go quick!'

"I did. I went up forward and lay out on the galley trunk and took my lip between my teeth and ate it. My hands still ached for a windpipe, but now 'twas my own. 'Tobey,' says I, 'what have you gone and done?'

"When it was getting dark I slid back aft. He never knew I was there. He never saw anything but the night coming in over the sea. His face was his skull. The look on it was the look of the thief on the other cross—the one that cursed Christ and went to hell. And that's when I wished I'd let him pass on that time when he had the chance, unknowing in his sleep.

"Well, all right. Next day she came up smiling as usual, only cheerier. Her thinking spell was done with a vengeance. Lord, I never heard the like of her chattering that day. There she sat perched on the rail, hanging onto a stay to balance her and swinging her feet like a girl going to a party. Only she'd *been*. The night before. Well, she told all about that, what a good time she'd had, what she wore, and everything. Then how she'd spent the morning: tennis, automobile, and everything. Then she'd been to the beach for a dip. It was too cold.

" 'But I've got to keep at it,' says she. 'I must learn to swim. Can you swim, Giles?'

" 'I shouldn't wonder,' says he, 'after a fashion.'

" 'Perhaps you'd be giving me the lessons then when it comes on warm again,' says she with a pretty mouth and a brogue. 'Fancy the grown-up hulk of me not knowing the stroke how to save me from perishing in the sea. It's a shame on me. And then,' says she, 'I went to the Carlton for lunch ——'

"I never knew what she had for lunch, for my eye was taken just then by something a sight more pressing. There that fool girl sat on the rail, swinging back and forth with the spirits she was in, and all she had hold of to balance her was—not the wire-wove stay—but a little bight of marline I'd left there looped around the shroud. My hair tickled to see it.

" 'Ay, *Miss!*' I threw her a hail, but that was wrong. It only gave her a start, and there snap goes the marline. She made one grab at the rail, and she let out one gasp: *'Giles!'* And over and down she goes into the port o' Cannes.

"For just that long I was froze! froze to the deck and staring at the rail. Then I came to, and I took a long step, and I heard Giles.

" 'Tobey, *stand where you are!*' It wasn't a voice; it was a bellowing bull. I had to look at him.

"There he sat with his head shoved back stubborn in the pillow and his face, from the place where his neck came out of the collar, as crimson-red as a new-dug beet with rage. Rage! Rage to break the world in two.

" *'Stand!'* he choked. 'Don't be a sucker, Tobey! Stand your ground!'

" 'But,' says I with a gulp and a stammer, 'she's fallen *over*board!'

" 'On *purpose,* you fool! *Damn* her! *Damn* her! *Damn her soul!*'

" 'You're crazy! She can't swim a stroke!'

"The laugh that came out of his mouth then! If you could have heard it tearing up the lining of his throat! I didn't have to hear it long. I was on that rail. I saw her head come up in a snag of hair and bubbles a little off toward the bow, and I dove. I got her. And none too soon to be the hero, for I guess there must have been five of her friends in after her off the mole. I got a hand under her chin and tread water for what I was worth, and I says in her ear. 'For God's sake, Miss Peg, open your eyes! Wake up! Come to!'

"Well, she came to, all right. She opened her eyes and gave me one look. And when she saw who I was—well, have you ever seen the eyes of a tiger-cat close to? A good wild tiger-cat with claws? It took her one jerk to get loose of me, and whoop-la! there goes Miss Peg under the bowsprit and off for the beach at about the finest specimen of the Australian crawl I've ever seen in my days at sea. It was elegant!

"When I came back aboard Giles says to me, 'I see you've got yourself wet, Tobey?'

"And I says, 'Thank God for one thing: *that's* done with *now,* for good and all!'

"And Giles says it after me, looking to sea, 'Thank God!' says he."

It cannot be hard to imagine the feelings of Peg Tyrone. Anyone who has ever been disgustingly drunk in public and had sense enough to remember it later will understand. No dawn of the morning after could have been colder or grayer than the moment when, weedy, bedraggled, and sobered off by the sovereign remedy of cold water, the Tyrone emerged from the port between the fishing boats and the eyes of Cannes.

She had made a spectacle of herself. First and last she had made "a holy show of herself," complete, public, humiliating, and, infinitely worse, to no end. The man who sat, still sat. Looking back at the thicket of yacht masts through the dribbling thicket of her front hair, she could figure the smile of disdain curling faintly that plebeian lip. Oh, she had dragged herself in the slime, all right. Peg Tyrone! Lovely Peg! Quite literally in the slime.

She had the choice of two alternatives, a choice to be made quickly, forsooth, before the bustle of concern, commiseration, and secret glee should reach her through the Allées and up the mole. On the other hand she could allow herself to be furious. Gorgeously furious! "A good wild tigercat with claws!" And such claws! On the other, she could allow herself to be amused.

She was amused.

Tobey had implored her to go down the gang-

plank and forget the way back. She did. She forgot it so completely that she did not even find it necessary to avoid its neighborhood, but continued to take her constitutional on the mole each afternoon, surrounded by the day's gallants and immensely amused, and if the splendor of her eyes chanced to fall upon the end of that gaping gangplank she saw no more in it than in the dozen others stretching to make contact with the world there across the watery margin of the unknown. The sailor had hinted it were best if she should forget that such a one as Giles had ever lived. She had done it, with a vengeance.

With a vengeance! Yes, indeed! In this connection the sailor asked me to believe something which he confessed he would not have believed himself, and that is that the ravishing Peg became of a sudden more ravishing than ever before.

"She always had pep enough," he told me, "but now she seemed to have even more. More pep, more glitter, more sparkle in the eye, more chins-up high-and-mightiness in the way she handled herself, and more than ever the look of 'Let's all be merry, gentlemen; but Beware the Dog!' That was her those days."

How Tobey should know these things I cannot say, having been relegated along with his friend into circumambient void, unless indeed he had taken again to "nursing his chew" on the taffrail, from which vantage to look down with an ironical philosophy upon those daily flauntings of her

amusement under the stern of the vessel she had forgot. But however that were, one thing comes out.

Now that the episode was finished; now that the farce was played and the curtain fallen and the time arrived to count up the proceeds of the show, the leading lady might be conceived to figure herself as fortunate indeed. Against the loss of a moment's self-respect she had to balance a tremendous profit in personality. A useful profit too. The whole "glitter" description of the sailor's suggests a new hardness, at least an exterior hardness, a brilliance refracting and defensive, without which (to mangle a metaphor) no nightingale might hope to get on far with her chosen career in a wood of weasels, even though the blood-sucking intentions of the weasels were invariably of the most honorable, which I suspect they were not.

So you will see in sum what Giles, to whom of course she was less than nothing, had yet succeeded willy-nilly in doing for Peg Tyrone. And you will see how the Tyrone, being now come to firm and joyous grips with life, self-assured and self-defended, triumphant, amused (almost feverishly amused)—you will see how the Tyrone had squared the account by completely forgetting Giles.

She had forgotten Giles in so thorough-going a fashion, indeed, that in the end she achieved that last triumph of forgetting, the ability to remember

him again without a tremor of malignancy or pain; remember him so disinterestedly, in fact, as to be able to pay him the friendliest and most casual of calls.

It chanced to be on the yacht's last full day in Cannes. The sailing master was to rejoin the vessel the following morning, and before noon she was to be under tow for Toulon, to go into repairs.

"It was a queer day, all told," the sailor informed me. "The weather had been fine a week, hardly a breeze going and not a cloud in the sky. And yet toward noon this day there began to come up a surf. A real one. It didn't go down either. From one hour to another it came stronger, rolling up white along the Croisette, tearing out blocks and raising Cain in general. There was no parade on the Esplanade that afternoon, I can tell you; everybody was busy hunting a lee. I say lee, but yet there wasn't a breath of wind. Even toward night, when it was at the worst, it held on that same dead calm. That was the funny part. It made a man feel queer. Something had happened somewhere. It was the wondering where. It must have been out there in the Mediterranean, away down deep under that bright and smiling skyline—some gale or earthquake—some devil of a ruction of some kind that nobody knew of. But what? and when? and where?"

I might almost have suspected the sailor of straining nature to set a scene, had I not myself

once seen the selfsame phenomenon along the selfsame shore.

"I'd been ashore for some small stores that afternoon," Tobey continued, "and some fun it was with the spray along the mole. And when I came back aboard who should I see sitting on a stool there alongside of Giles and looking like the minister's wife in with a glass of jell but Peg Tyrone herself. She called him *Mr.* Giles. No more 'Giles darling.' *Mr.* Giles, if you please. No more of her playful brogue. No more about the 'lazy carcass' of him. But now 'twas, 'what extraordinary weather!' and, 'Do you enjoy the morning concerts, Mr. Giles? Or can't you hear them from here?' And the like of that. And, 'Do you like music, Mr. Giles? I was thinking, if you did ——' and she was fumbling hard to get her handbag open, and her lips as tight as wire— 'I was thinking if you did you might like to hear "Manon" to-night. Would you feel like making use of this seat, Mr. Giles?' She handed him over a paper and took an interest in the surf astern. 'I'm singing,' says she.

"Well, Giles took his eyes out of the sky and studied the paper. He turned it over and studied the back, and then the front again.

" 'I was just wondering,' says she, with half a yawn, 'if you'd care to make use of it to-night.'

" 'Thank you very much,' says Giles. 'I will.'

"She got up and went then, and I looked Giles up and down.

" 'What a liar you are!' says I.

" 'Tobey,' says he, still studying the card, 'I pity that girl.'

" 'Ho, ho!' says I, 'and ha, ha!'

" 'No,' says he with a kind of anger, 'but it's a hard, rotten, wrong, damned proposition to put up to a girl like that, who was meant to queen.'

" 'Giles,' says I, 'what's ailing you? You look peaked to-day and you act queer. Feel sick?'

" 'And I'm *not* a liar,' says he. 'I said I'd make use of this ticket and I'm going to. I'm going to give it to *you*.'

" 'The hell you are!' says I.

" 'This seat,' says he, 'is pretty well back in the house, and, what's more, it will be half dark at the time. And if you sit there with your head sort of down in your hands ——'

" 'The hell I will!' says I.

"Well, I won't go into the arguments. The upshot was that after supper I got a shave and a polish, put on my serge suit, took the ticket in my hand, and stood in line before the wicket man at the show up in the Casino there. He looked at my ticket, then he looked at me, then at a sign stuck up beside the door.

" 'What's wrong?' says I, seeing the sign was in French. There was an Englishman next me, a good-natured old fellow who passed it off with a wink and a grin. 'That says, "Evening dress requested," ' says he, 'and that means "dress suit." '

"Well, I got out of *that* place. Don't worry, I *got!* And fit to curse and kill I was. 'Tobey,' says I, you're not fit to be seen in decent company. Go home!' Only it came to me I couldn't go back aboard unless I wanted ructions—not yet awhile.

"So, with all this, I was leaning up against the fence in the dark around the corner and wondering where to go, when all of a sudden what should I hear but Peg Tyrone singing a song. It came out of a slit in the wall over my head, and man! she was singing! She was singing, man! Maybe it was because I was nearer to—we'd heard her plenty of times on still nights out there aboard, and in that same song too—we were what you might call 'coniseers' of that voice, Giles and I, or at least I was, for I never saw Giles let on—well, maybe it was because I was closer to—that night. But I don't think. No, it was different. Man, have you ever heard human singing that reached down your throat and hauled your heart out whole? Have you ever heard a voice to pull you through a stone wall? I've never been much of a hand for queer ideas, but I had them that night, listening to that song. One of them was how grand it would be to be a cab horse and stand there along the curbing with the rest of them all the nights of my life. And just then the song stopped. It wasn't finished, understand; it just broke off. And then the music, too.

"'Go on!' says I, 'go on!' But it didn't. I

don't know how long it was I stood there waiting for the next note to come, but I had to give up holding in my breath; I know that much.

"By and by I heard some one talking inside, a man's voice, making a speech. And then after another while the song went on—not *on*—it started over again, and it was some other woman singing, not Peg Tyrone.

"Well, it came into my head like that, like two pictures on a screen. One was the picture of that empty seat in there, looming up like a lost tooth. And the other picture was the eyes of the tiger cat with claws.

" 'Tobey,' says I, 'you get back aboard!'

"I got, I came out along the mole, ducking under the spray that made a thunder of a cloud over the seaward side, tucking up my pants and going tiptoe, and I came up the plank and onto the deck.

"Oh, she was there, never doubt! There in nothing to speak of, with a cape thrown over. She stood with her fists planted on the after capstan-drum and her chin out and her eyes on Giles in his long chair by the companion door. And she was breathing hard.

"I got around along the rail, and I thought I'd go forward. Then I thought I wouldn't. I stopped near Giles.

" 'Want me around?' says I in a whisper.

" 'Yes,' says he in the same, without turning his head.

"Then Peg spoke up. 'What's that man doing here?' says she in a tone.

" 'Best go along, Tobey,' says Giles, 'after all.'

" 'Not in a thousand years,' says I. 'You asked me once to stay.'

" 'Is he going?' says she, with the same rip of scorn.

" 'He says not,' says Giles.

"For a minute she held her breath. She stood there above the drum—the smoke of surf beyond the mole, with the light from the Casino through it, blocked her out for us under the awning, black and plain—she stood there holding her breath. And it was poison-bitter when she let it come.

" 'So you think,' says she, 'you think to make me swallow that as well?'

" 'No!' says Giles, 'No!' It sounded between a cough and a groan in his throat, but nobody but me could hear. And then, 'Go, Tobey,' says he; 'for the love of pity ——'

" 'Not in a thousand years!'

"She began to laugh then, a low kind of a laugh that mixed in with the surf and died away and came again and played around with itself. And 'Never mind you, gentlemen!' she laughed. 'Never mind!' For what is one in the audience the more or less to Peg Tyrone, whose life it is to turn the shameless soul of her wrong-side-out for all the world to see? Never mind you! Never mind!' And that laugh of hers went on.

" 'Don't!' says Giles in his throat, but no one but me could hear.

"Her laugh went on, and it racked her and came out fire in the end.

" 'Do you know, Giles, why I'm here—why I've come running out here for this one last time, tonight? I'll tell you why. It's because of the queer thought you've got somehow in your head—the notion I'm in love with you. I've come to tell you the way I love you, Giles. I love you the way I'd love a poison serpent under the heel of my shoe! I love you the way I'd love the roach befouling the butter crock! I love you the way I'd love the slime the toad leaves under the hedge! That's the way I despise you, Giles! Not hate! Ah, no! Don't pride yourself on that, fine lad! Ah, no! No! No—no—no—no—no ——'

"She was up to her full height then against the cloud of spray, and her arms spread like the bar of a cross and her fingers clawed at the ends.

" 'God save me!' she cries, 'from the burning of the lie in my throat! I hate you, Giles! I hate you, I hate you, Giles!'

" 'And,' says Giles in a steady tone (but I can see his hands on the chair arms now), 'and,' says Giles, 'the way you hate me is a pale thing beside the hate I bear for you!'

"She went up higher at that, on the tips of her toes, it seemed, and her arms like wings, waiting.

" 'I hate you,' he kept on in the same deliberate tone, 'as I would hate a thief come sneaking in the

night to rob the poorest man. To rob the man that's lost in the fire all the wealth and plenty he had and saved of it only the one black penny to keep him alive. For a wanton and a thief come sneaking to steal that penny away I hate you now!'

" 'And tell me,' she cried in scorn, 'the penny, Giles, I'd be robbing you of?'

" 'The sniveling, black, unhealthy penny of a man's last pride.'

" *'Pride!'* She jumped at it. She leaped at it. *'Pride,* is it?' She plucked at the flimsy stuff at her neck as if she wanted to strip her bare with the bitter mockery of that. 'So now then it's *pride!* The pride of Peg Tyrone? Ah, no, nothing so paltry as that. The pride, if it please you, of Mr. John Giles! Ah, to be sure! *Giles's* pride!'

" 'And since we hate each other so,' says Giles, 'it's God's mercy that to-morrow will see the parting of our ways.'

" 'What?' She spoke it in a quiet, funny tone, taking her hands down.

" 'To-morrow is the day this vessel clears from Cannes, and I with it, and that's luck, isn't it?'

" 'What?' says she. She seemed to find it hard to understand. She put her hands back to her neck. 'You're going away to-morrow, Giles?'

"She came around the capstan then and toward him, and about halfway she stopped, and 'Giles,' she says, 'Giles, lad, whatever is it makes such fools of the two blind, obstinate creatures we are?'

All the bitter anger was gone out of her voice, and everything but a kind of trouble and fright.

" 'Giles,' says she, 'I know how it is, because I used to have a pride in me as well. Only mine was a right pride and yours is a wrong one—a black and unhealthy pride, the way you told me with your own lips it was—and it's that that's holding you foot-bound like a sick man here; is it not, Giles?

" 'And Giles,' says she, coming another step, 'it's the blackest and unhealthiest of all the prides, that is; the pride that says, "I'm wise enough to know there are things beyond me to hope for," which is the same as to say, "I'm not as good as other men." Ah, Giles, if you'd but stand yourself up among them—stand at your height! If only you would do that! If only you'd wipe the black blindness from your eyes and put out your hand, boldly and devil-may-care, and take the thing you're wanting in your heart! For you're wanting, Giles! Wanting, lad! Do you think I'm blind? I too? Giles! Giles!'

"If you'd heard that voice of hers then as I heard it (and I was thinking if it had been 'Tobey! Tobey!' instead, I'd have gone through iron bars) —that voice, or that song; that whispering song to drag a man across the gulf of hell!

" 'For you love me, Giles,' says she, 'and you needn't tell me no. You've loved me for long and for long, and don't say no. And yet you can't put out your hand. You can't say to the twisted heart

of you, "No matter about anything else, here's a lad and here's a lass, here's a man and here's a woman, fashioned to walk together in the morning of the world, as the blindest of men could see!" Ah Giles! Giles!'

" 'Tobey,' says I to myself, 'if you can't do anything with your head, do something with your hands.' For the chair beside me was shaking with an ague and I heard Giles's breath in his throat. I laid a friendly grip on his wrist, but he knocked it off, and his voice came thick.

" 'Stand back!' says he to her.

" 'Yes, yes!' says she, and she went back, like dancing, till she came beside the wheel. 'I know,' says she. 'For you'd be despising me till your death day, Giles, and yourself still more, Giles, if it weren't on your own two feet you came. Would you not, Giles?'

"There she stood with her chin up and her hands behind her back, the dead calm around her, breathless and heavy, and the surf all around the calm.

" 'I'm waiting, Giles.'

" 'Giles,' says I in a whisper, 'for the love of God!'

" 'I'm waiting, Giles.' Her voice, over the sound of the surf, was so sure and steady it gave me a creep of fear. And, 'It's not far, Giles,' says she, 'for a man to come across for the glory of two.'

"Giles heaved his arms; he shook his head to shake the words out.

" 'Not the glory, but the damnation—if I were to come.'

" '*I* know, lad.'

" 'But you *don't* know!'

" 'I know the one thing, Giles, for it was your own two lips that told me. If you walk this far to me you'll go on walking with me to the end; walking over the flower-bed of the world ——'

" 'And you'd hate the sight of flowers forever, and so would I.'

" 'And you'd be happy, lad, and I would sing ——'

" 'The song would choke in your throat, and I would pray to die.'

" 'I'm waiting, Giles.'

"A minute went by. Sixty breathless seconds. Sixty frozen seconds.

" 'I'm waiting, Giles,' says she, and there was something else in her voice now, 'waiting,' says she, 'for the last time.'

" 'Giles,' says I, sitting tight to the chair. 'Son,' says I in a whisper, 'for the sake of Heaven, son,' says I, *'remember!'*

"I doubt if it ever reached him, for I heard the breath fighting in his own windpipe: 'No! No! God, no! No! Hell, no!' And he sat. And out of the corner of an eye I saw Peg droop her shoulders and turn away.

" 'Man!' says I in his ear, and I wanted to yell it out with my lungs. 'Oh, man, that's done!' I put a hand on his shoulder then, and 'Let down!'

says I. 'Let loose of you, Giles; it's finished and she's gone!'

" 'What's that she's doing now?' says he, and I heard him groan.

"She'd got as far as the rail by the gangway, and there she hung with her arms crossed on it and her face hid away.

" 'She's crying,' says Giles. 'She's—she's crying,' says he.

" 'It'll do her good,' says I. 'Now never you mind.'

" 'Why—why—I—I can't stand *that!*' says he. He looked this way and that way. He looked up and down. 'I can't—can't stand *that!*' says he in a whisper, and by the look of him I saw he was done.

" 'You wait,' says I, 'and I'll tend to *her!*' and heaved up off the deck to go about it, but his fingers were on my sleeve.

" 'I—I—can't stand *that!*' says he, and I could feel him shaking. 'That's too much. Crying!'

"I jerked loose and I walked straight and I walked fast. But I couldn't walk fast enough to beat the wail he lifted up to follow.

" 'Peg!' he was wailing (and to think that was Giles). 'Don't, Peg! Ah, Peg, don't! Don't!'

"I made a rush of it then to get her and get her away. But his wailing beat me all the time.

" 'No, Peg! No, girl, no! Ah, Peg, if you only won't! Listen, Peg, if you only won't ——'

"I'd reached her then and set about her, none too

gentle, I'm afraid. I took hold of her shoulders to lift her head. But Lord! there was no need. It came up of itself, and her eyes, all shiny with crying, swung over my shoulder to Giles's wail.

" 'I—I'm coming, Peg! I'm coming now!'

" 'No!' says I, 'by God!' I tried to clap a hand over her eyes, but I might have been a baby then, and she the man. She was clear of me, standing there at her height, waiting to see.

"And all of a sudden, 'Not like that!' she cries. 'Not *so!* On your feet, man, proudly! Never on your knees!'

"And then, God help me, I knew it was true; and God help me, I had to turn to see.

"I hope, sir, I never have to look on the like of that again—the like of John Giles coming out from under the shadow onto that starlit deck there—coming low and slow with pain—walking on his stumps to Peg Tyrone.

" 'Giles!' I heard her cry out again, and there was a touch of queerness now and bewilderment and fear. 'Up, lad! Get—get up!'

"But there he kept on coming without a sound, shuffling, tottering, touching the deck with his finger ends like a dumb ape in the zoo, and chewing his lip with the hurt of the planking on the raw of his legs, where they'd taken them off there, the two of them, just under and clear of the knee. There he came.

" *'Giles!'* Horror that was. Horror, pure.

" 'Yes, and *Peg!*' says he, grinning like a skull

with the work it cost. 'You wanted the penny, Peg!'

" *'Giles!'* Horror that still was, but a horror and a craze of pity and guilt. *'Lad!'* she cries, and I saw her break forward a step with her hands stretched down. Giles gave me the word.

" 'Take her, Tobey!' he sang out. *'Now!'*

"I took her. I was stout enough this time. I caught her up and I fetched her down that plank and onto that mole, praying for a miracle the while. And the miracle was there.

"It was the manager or something from the opera up there coming down the mole, and he was good and purple mad and looking for Peg Tyrone.

" 'Take her away forever,' says I, and he took her away.

"When I came back aboard I was near falling over Giles. He was under the rail there where she'd stood to cry, lying there in the shadow with his face to the planks.

" 'Giles,' says I. 'Son,' says I, and God help me, I didn't know what to say. 'Come, son,' says I. 'Time to go by-low now.'

" 'Just a minute,' says he.

" 'Don't blubber,' says I.

" 'I'm not,' says he. 'But just a minute, please. If you wouldn't mind heaving that gangplank clear,' says he.

"I went to the port-side shrouds and took a turn on the toppin'-lift to fetch the plank up clear of

the mole. Then I went back and stood over him, wondering more than ever what to say.

" 'Old man,' says I, 'you don't know how sorry I am it had to happen.'

" 'You needn't be, Tobey,' says he. 'I'm not. I'm glad.'

" 'For her, maybe,' says I.

" 'Yes, for her,' says he, 'and especially for *me.*'

"It seemed to me he must be a little woozy. I laid a hand on his shoulder and I says, 'Come along, son; hop up piggy-back and let's go down. You've done enough walking for one night, I guess. Your new legs'll be coming along in a week or so, and then, maybe ——'

" 'They're come already,' says he.

" 'How's that?' says I, to humor him, the while I was getting him up and onto my back, like I always did. 'How's that, my lad?'

" 'Did you ever know, Tobey,' says he in my ear, 'what it was to have a disease in your soul, and hug it tight? And did you ever know what it was to feel yourself get well again? To cough it up black and come clear?'

" 'Yes,' says I, tramping along the deck, 'yes, all right. But as for the legs now ——'

" 'The legs will do, Tobey. I was right, that time. And she was right. I *did* walk that far, after all, because I never loved a woman before and I'll never love another again. And it happened, Tobey! It did happen. The spell is broken! My sitting days are done, Tobey. Glory

be! I'll have to go on walking now to the end!"

"'All right,' says I, still humoring. 'And look out there,' says I; 'I guess we'll get away to-morrow sure enough. That queer, ungodly surf is beginning to slack away.'

"'Yes,' says he. Like that.

"And that was the last we said."

THE END

DATE DUE

SEP 1 6 1986

JAN 2 6 1987

DEC 2 4 2000

GAYLORD

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

University of the Pacific Library

283889

Steele, Wilbur D.
The shame dance.

PS
3500
S814
S5

S0-AKP-346